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Editor's Note

A seminar on the influence of the Rāmāyaṇa in life, literature and culture in eastern India was held under the auspices of the Post-Graduate Department of Modern Indian Languages, Calcutta University on 14th, 15th and 16th March, 1980. In this connection I feel it my duty as editor of this volume to apprise the readers of some informations.

The story of the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki, translated and adapted in different languages of eastern India, is treated in different manners and diverse ways. Still each version bears a close affinity with another, irrespective of far-flung linguistic geography of any State belonging to the eastern part of this sub-continent. The Rāmāyaṇa, the great creation of one of the greatest seers of ancient India, is not only an epic, but a sacred document spreading through the centuries. The translations and adaptations of the Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki have also drawn the people of different areas towards a homogeneous growth of mutual understanding. The sublime stories, variegated characters and aesthetic elegance of this great book never faded away in oblivion, and it is still held as the perennial spring to the creative imagination of the writers in regional languages. As regards national integration, which has become a catch-word of political leaders now-a-days, this epic plays a vital role in forging ethical cohesion, warmest fraternity and social consciousness. With this idea in mind the seminar was arranged by the Department of Modern Indian Languages to find out the chord of cultural ties, if any, amongst the different language groups of eastern India.

We have been guided by other considerations also. Since the inception of the Department of Modern Indian Languages in 1919 within the Post Graduate Faculty of Arts, the University of Calcutta till the forties, the PG Studies continued in Bengali, Oriya, Assamese, Hindi, Maithili—along with other major Indian languages. A comparative study of different languages of Indo-Aryan branches as provided in the syllabus, played a significant role. The object of the seminar on the Rāmāyaṇa was aimed at this role.

Twenty nine scholars from West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Orissa and Bangladesh presented their valuable research papers in six sessions. In the evening sessions the influence of the Rāmāyaṇa on Indian culture was presented through cultural programmes and musical soirée, both by outside agencies and by the students of the Department of Bengali. The items included *Chhau* (mask) dance of Purulia, Kathak dance, all centering round the tales of the epic, dramatic recital from a portion of the 'Meghanāda-badha Kāvya' by Michael, Madhusudan Datta and staging of 'Vālmīki-Pratibhā', a musical drama by Tagore.

In this connection I am to apologize to the participants as I could not accommodate all the papers presented in the seminar for some unavoidable circumstances. But I should like to express my gratitude to them for their co-operation, I must take this opportunity to convey my heart-felt thanks to Dr. Ramendrakumar Poddar, Vice-Chancellor, University of Calcutta for his active help. The Department of Education, Government of West Bengal, also helped us financially. As the Head of the Department of MIL and President of the Seminar I am grateful to my colleagues, particularly to Shri Sankariprasad Basu and Dr. Pranabranjan Ghosh, two senior readers, non-teaching staff and students, both past and present, of the Department for their active help in each step. Dr. Nirmalendu Bhowmick and Dr. Manas Majumdar, joint assistant editors of this volume, have been kind enough to go through the proof sheets. Inspite of their keen interest and best effort a few misprints could not be avoided. Dr Subhash C. Banerjee, Secretary, University Colleges of Arts

and Commerce and Dr. Tushar Kanti Mahapatra, Secretary, Bengali Publications Cammittee, extended their hands of co-operation for giving a final shape to each session and other functional matters. Shri Sarbanath Bhattacharya, and Sri Tapan Maji, two of my ex-students, were always ready with help whenever it was saught. Lastly, I want to thank Sri Asoke Ray of Prajñā for undertaking the responsibility of publishing the volume.

I hope this collection would be appreciated as a modest model of national integration which comes through the aesthetic expression of the people of different parts of a vast country like India.

Ethno-Cultural Contacts in the Ramayana

Probodh Kumar Bhowmick

The Rāmāyaṇa, the great epic, reflects the "collective unconscious" of India. It centres round Rāmacandra, the eldest of the four sons of King Daśaratha of Ayodhyā, who is believed to be the seventh incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu—the all protector god of the Hindus. His life has become encased in loving events and legends which are described very carefully by Vālmīki. It is believed that the poet foresaw the events 60,000 years ahead. The story has a very profound impact on peoples, beliefs and emotions. Over the centuries it has established some codes of conduct guiding the behaviour of individuals in society.

Rāma rescues the country from the tyranny of the Rākṣasa king Rāvaṇa, which reaffirms his divinity and makes him an object of reverence and worship throughout the country. This Rāvaṇa, through a boon from Lord Brahmā, had become universally invincible and had been harassing all beings including gods ; Viṣṇu, at the request of the gods had to be born as one of the four sons of king Daśaratha and save the world from the Rākṣasas. The confrontation with Rāvaṇa began with the latter's abducting Sītā. With the help of the Vānaras Rāma locates Sītā in the island of Laṅkā, kills Rāvaṇa, installs his brother Bibhīṣaṇa on the throne and rescues Sītā. In this respect he was helped by Vānaras, possibly a powerful aboriginal group of food-gatherers symbolised by the poet as the monkeys. Thus Rāma, the human being, combined with Sugrīva, hanumāna and the other monkey heroes, to score over Rāvaṇa, the king of the Rākṣasas. Rāvaṇa, though the son of a Ṛṣi, had acquired a character unworthy of a Brāhmaṇa and his subjects were a great hindrance

to the Brāhminical way of life. The Rāmāyaṇa at its best thus reflects the existing socio-ecomic conditions and presents an ideal model character to the society. Thus Rāma is presented as an ideal son, brother, husband. He was also an ideal king with authority, power and administrative acumen and popularity. Sītā appears as an ideal wife accepting without questions all tribulations and sufferings for the cause of her beloved husband. Lakṣmaṇa, an ideal brother, steadfastly stands by his elder brother. Friends like Sugrīva and Bibhīṣaṇa are honest counsellors and life-long supporters. Hanumāna appears as a noble-hearted servant ready to risk his life for the noble cause of his master. Before his apotheosis, Rāma was considered a man with all human desires and aspirations bound to perform all the duties in the existing social system. Now all over the country he has been deified along with hanumāna. The deification described in the Uttarakāṇḍa may be an act of interpolation.

II

The Rāmāyaṇa composed by poet Vālmīki has all-India circulation and from time to time has been translated into regional languages. In course of translation, the new authors tried to interpolate facts, local and regional in nature. Besides, the emotion, sentiment and the mental outlook, etc., have been projected and portrayed to suit local conditions, though the central theme remained the same. "Rāma-Carita-Mānasa" composed by poet Tulasī dāsa is a version where more devotion, respect and regard for Rāma find poetic expression.

The Bangali poet Kṛittibāsa Ojhā composed "Rāmer Pāñcāli" about four hundred years ago. This is a very popular book in Bengal. There has been revision from time to time of which Jaygopal Tarkālaṅkār's edition is important. It was printed in 1830-34. Many persons tried to search out the original language and style of Kṛittibāsa but it has been so interlaced with the editions that it is very difficult to find out the original version. Regional versions of the Rāmāyaṇa were in vogue in Bengal, of which Bhabāni Dāsa's Śrī Rām Pāñcāli is worth-

mentioning. Attempts have been made by scholars to readjust events in the Rāmāyaṇa to local situations. Dīneś Candra Sen, Rājaśekhar Basu had their distinctive versions. I have used here 1974 edition of 'Kṛttibāsī Rāmāyaṇa' published by "Sākṣaratā Prakāśani", Calcutta.

III

Dating of the Rāmāyaṇa is not easy. It, however, reveals a slow Brāhmaṇization process of the North India. The Aryans had already got securely settled in the fertile region of the Gangetic valley. The economy was based on agriculture. The Brāhmaṇical order had been established with an elaborate caste system with the undisputed supremacy of the Brāhmaṇas. The Śambuka legend testifies to the deprivation suffered by the lower castes. The aboriginals or Śavaras with their economy based on hunting and food gathering lived in the south. The story of Śavarī, and Guhaka point to a situation of the groups in conformity with the order of Varṇāśrama. A reference is also made to an earlier incarnation of Viṣṇu in the form of Paraśurāma who subjugated the Kṣatriyas and re-established Brāhmaṇical supremacy. Rāma, though born as a Kṣatriya, is projected as an upholder of the Brāhmaṇical order and supremacy. This is amply demonstrated by the description of the conflict between Vaśiṣṭha and Viśwāmitra.

The Rākṣasas have been described as a conservative (Rakṣā—to preserve), i. e., traditional aggressive, ruthless cultural group of distinctive ethnic character strongly resenting and antagonistic to the Brāhmaṇical way of life. They were not fully agriculturists and lived mainly on plundering. They were rich and lived in Laṅkā described as a golden city unsurpassed in wealth and splendour. Their leaders were described by the Sanskritic poet rather derogatively, viz. Daśānana (a person with ten heads), Kumbhakarṇa (a person with pot-like ears), Bibhīṣaṇa (a person with a dreadful look), Śūrpaṇakhā (the lady with stretched nails like Śūrpa, i.e., winnowing fan), Their kingdom, away from the mainland of Bhārata (India)

was an island (hideouts) where they accumulated the plundered wealth. They lived an urban life with parks and gardens (Aśoka garden) which were neatly and beautifully designed. This was the place where Sītā was kept as a captive. The Rākṣasas had many other hide-outs in isolated jungles and deep forests of the main land. They had a great mastery over magic and sorcery. A recurrent theme in the Rāmāyaṇa is how to bring them to the Brāhmaṇical way of life and the goal was finally accomplished by installing a cultured man like Bibhīṣaṇa.

It is, therefore, very clear that the Rāmāyaṇa depicts three important ethno-cultural groups of which Rāma-Vaśiṣṭha-Viśwāmitra-Janaka group is the embodiment of the Brāhmaṇical way of life ; Janaka, the "king ṛṣi", possibly symbolises the re-establishment of agriculture which was seriously damaged through ethnic conflicts. Sītā, who was discovered in the process of ploughing, may be taken for a personification of the goddess of production or symbol of agriculture.

IV

It is difficult to establish the exact chronology of events in terms of social and economic development. However, I have tried to read in the description of the Rāmāyaṇa a process of development of society from a food gathering or hunting stage through paṣtoral economy to gardening or rudimentary agriculture. In India we have evidences of food gathering economy of most primitive nature. Lithic tools of different types unearthed at many places of our country testify to the presence of an early type of civilization when bows and arrows and such other types of implements were important. The primitive world gradually adopted agriculture and used such tools as dibbles, spades, hoes, and later bullock drawn ploughs, in certain areas. Agriculture seems to have suffered a setback with the penetration of the pastoral Aryans who described the indigenous people as Dāsas, Dasyus Panis, Asuras, Rākṣasas, etc. etc. The Rāmāyaṇa i. e., the story of Rāma is considered as an event of Tretā, belonging to the second great mythological

era after which we get Dwāpara when the pastoral herdsman dominated as Aryan invaders with their better technology and cattle economy. In the Rāmāyaṇa and other Paurāṇik literature there is a recurrent reference to three domains : Swarga (the abode of the gods), Martya (the abode of men, beasts, Asuras, etc,) and Pātāl (domain of serpents). Though nothing definite can be said about three domains, they may be symbolic reprsentation of three distinct ethno-cultural zones. Gods as well as heroes of Martya and Pātāl had their access to three domains.

In the Rāmāyaṇa, as referred to earlier, we get three distinctive ethno-cultural identities, interacting on one another in many situations. Rāma establishes friendship with the aboriginal or aboriginal derivative, Guhaka-Śavara,. kills the Rākṣasī Tāḍakā, drives her supporters away. He then marries Sītā (symbol of agriculture). These events very clearly testify to the socio-economic transformation in Mithilā, Kośala and Ayodhyā regions and their neighbourhood. The Śambuka legend projects the Brāhmaṇa dominated society as a closed society instead of an open society as we find in the Ṛgveda. The Brāhmaṇical supremacy seems to have been fully established through the patronage of the kings. Daśaratha was a typical example of a king who was ever eager to oblige the Brāhmaṇas. A tangential reference to Paraśurāma, i. e. Rāma with paraśu (axe) and his de-kṣatriaisation of the world, in the context of the Rāmāyaṇa may be interpreted as the re-establishment of Brāhmaṇa-Kṣatriya alliance and the clearance of misunderstanding between the two powerful groups.

This Gangetic valley is the scene where the acculturation and transformation went on simultaneously, Vaśiṣṭha and other sages were teachers specializing not only in ethics, religion but also in military science. The king was helpless without his *Purohita* i. e. priest. Thus we see a long history of acculturation through Brāhmaṇical dominance. Four-tier Hindu social system was in vogue—Brāhmaṇa and Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, Śūdṛa and untouchable outcastes like Caṇḍālas and the docile traibal population accepting supremacy represented by the Śavaras. Tāḍakā is undoubtedly an untamed, hostile tribal woman

strongly resenting Brāhmaṇical style of life. Janaka, the king-sage revived agriculture through practice and gave it a shape and form. Hence, he is Janaka, i. e., 'father'. Sītā is undoubtedly the symbol of agriculture—a symbol of prosperity, happiness and security achieved through sincere painstaking labour. Thus, Janaka, the Ṛṣi, 'mantradraṣṭā, visualized that bows and arrows were no more important for secure and prosperous life. Possibly he was in need of a great entrepreneur who was in a position to diffuse agriculture gradually replacing food gathering economy—an economy of insecurity and insufficiency. The replacement of the bow by the plough is symbolized in the destruction of the Haradhaṅu, the great bow, i.e., the bow-culture, by Rāma who was the chosen hero to be entrusted with Sītā, the symbol of agriculture. The episode of Ahalyā, the story of the unfurrowed (ahalakarṣitā) land, is another story of symbolization of the revival of agriculture. So Rāmacandra had also to carry on the mission of transforming the socio-economic life in far south, i.e., the jungles away from the Brāhmaṇical fold, the abode of the Vānaras and the Rākṣasas. Though in the legend of Agastya, an earlier attempt on the part of the Brāhmaṇas to penetrate into the south may be imagined, most probably that attempt did not succeed. The Vānara society and culture is a distinctive ethnocultural type represented by Vālī-Sugrīva Aṅgada-Hanumāna constellation. Their economy is undoubtedly one of gathering economy in which collection of edible roots, tubes, leaves, fruits, etc., has been prevalent. The Vānara king Vālī and Sugrīva are two affectionate brothers. Sugrīva has profound regard and respect for his elder brother. However, misunderstanding drags the brothers apart and Sugrīva is banished with some of his sincere followers among whom Hanumāna is the most important. After the death of Vālī, Sugrīvā became the king and Tārā became his queen. This indicates prevalence of levirate in Kiṣkindhyā, but all along the description shows that this group of people is very simple, sincere and faithful. These people surrender to the alien culture symbolized by Rāma. A very sincere servant-master relation has been reflected in the activities of Hanumāna who later on was deified.

Rāvaṇa-Bibhīṣaṇa-Indrajit-Kumbhakarṇa constellation in Laṅkā has been described as Rākṣasa culture. This is undoubtedly a different ethno-cultural type. Rākṣasa group of peope, as stated earlier, are more conservative, i.e, traditional. They are described by the Sanskrit poet in a rather derogatory way. The names have been coined to depict their physical features, appearance, limited culture and style of life.

The Rākṣasas practise a new kind of magic and sorcery. Changing the body forms is a very ususal pattern of life of the Rākṣasas. They are also plunderers and not producers.

Their kingdom or head quarter is at Laṅkā, the golden city with charming and beautiful buildings and parks. Though Rāvana maintains to some extent his Brāhminical background ("It was still dark and not yet dawn. Rāvaṇa was roused from his slumber by the chanting of the vadas and morning songs by court bards") the Rākṣasas by and large are anti-Brāhmaṇs. Thus Rāma is represented as an embodiment of the most ideal elements of the culture of whose he is a part and so are others of his group.

The Vālī-Sugrīva-Hanumāna complex represents a culture of food gatherers keen to accept the culture and ideals of Rāma. Rāvaṇa represents an aggressive cultural model and is not restrained by any inhibitions and is chiefly guided by lust and passion.

The story of Rāmāyaṇa is a story of conflict between two cultural systems, that Rāvaṇa and Rāma on the one hand and co-operation between that of Rāma and Sugrīva on the other. Finally, Rāma triumphs and Bibhīṣaṇa becomes an agent of change installed by Rāma to unify and integrate the Rākṣasa. Thus, Rāma, the God-man endowed with desired qualities is the best ideal for most persons and is described as one of God's humun incarnations, who has established the code of ethics —concerning the behaviour of the individuals and to some extent the code of ethics of the dominant religion expected to control all the communities.

1. One is reminded of the episode of the art by which Marica, a Raksasa, turns himself into a Swarna-Mrga, i.e., a golden (or gold) stag to drag Rama away from his cottage so that Ravana can take Sita away. The legend according to some represents the lust for gold of the Aryans represented by Sita and Rama. Others, however, reject this view on the ground that the Aryans also were prosperous, and their prosperity was reflected in the pomp and splendour of Ayodhya.

2. Ravana wanted to forcibly take away, Sita the agricultural know-how from Rama, the representative of the Aryans, which the latter was most reluctant to surrender. Rama demanded humbling of the Raksasas. When Ravana was defeated, the task was accomplished. Naturally, Bibhisana, who surrendered to the Aryan king Rama, was allowed to rule over Lanka the abode of the Raksasas.

The Ramayana in the Buddhist and Jaina Texts Canonical and Non-Canonical

Asim Kumar Chatterjee

The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki was a tremendously popular epic from the very beginning. This is evident from the fact, that hundreds of later writers beginning from Bhāsa and Aśwaghṣoa, to Michael M. S. Dutt and Tagore of our times, were directly or indirectly influenced by this immensely readable and gentle epic. Even the bitterest enemies of the Brāhmaṇical religion viz. the Buddhists and the Jainas, have sometimes openly, and sometimes surreptitiously borrowed materials and ideas from this poem. This Ādikāvya like the dēvatātma Himālaya, has continued to feed the best and noblest minds of this vast subcontinent. In this dissertation we will try to analyse the treatment of the characters and events of Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa in the literary texts of the Buddhists and Jainas.

First, let us see what the Buddhist writers have to say on the persons and events, painted in the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki. The wellknown Daśaratha Jātaka (No. 461) has often been misunderstood by scholars, who think that the author of this Jātaka has actually followed a different tradition regarding Rāma and not the Rāmayāṇa of Vālmıki. Nothing can be farther from the truth. A reading between the lines of the verse section of this Jātaka and also its prose portion would show that the author of the Daśaratha Jātaka was well at home with the Rāmāyaṇa and especially its second book i.e., the Ayodhyākāṇḍa. It is true that the writer of the prose section of this Jātaka has inadvertently represented Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and Sītā as brothers and sister, but there is no indication, whatsoever, in the older verse-section, that the poet of these verses, ever pictured them as such. Some overzealous modern

scholars have made a lot of noise on this point. But it can be conclusively shown not only from the verse section of the Daśaratha Jātaka, but also from other Jātakas as well, that the poets of the original Jātaka stories never represented Rāma as the brother of Sītā. The following verse occurring in the Vessantara Jātaka (No.547) proves that the poet of the Jātaka had no confusion regarding the relationship between Rāma and Sītā—

avaruddhassāhaṁ bhariyā rājaputtassa sirimato/
tāṁ cāham nātimaññami, Rāmaṃ Sītā vanubbatā//

Following is the translation by Cowell and Rouse—

I am a banishted prince's wife, a prince of glory fair,
As Sītā did for Rāma, so I for my husband care.

Apart from showing that Sītā was known as Rāma's wife and not his sister, this verse also indirectly testifies that the author was more or less familiar with chapters 27 and 29 of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa. The present writer strongly maintains that while writing this verse the poet of this Jātaka had almost the whole of the Rāmāyaṇa in mind. The adjective vanubbatā is too close to the spirit of the Rāmāyaṇa to be misinterpreted. We will not stop with the evidence only. The whole of the Daśaratha Jātaka, as a matter of fact, is a resume of the second book of the Rāmāyaṇa. The machinations of the mother of Bharata, the banishment of the prince, Bharata's attempts to bring back Rāma, and finally the incident of the 'slippers' all show how deeply familiar the author of the Daśaratha Jātaka was with the Ayodhyākāṇḍa. It is true that the writer of the prose section of this Jātaka represents Daśaratha as the king of Banaras, but in the older verse-section here is no such indication. The last verse of the Daśaratha Jātaka is, in our opinion, clearly influenced by the Rāmāyaṇa. This verse runs as follows :—

dasa vassasahassāni saṭṭhi vassasatāni ca/
kambugivo mahābāhu Rāma rajjamakarayīti//

Let us now compare this verse with the following śloka from the Yuddhakāṇḍa (131. 106) :—

daas varsasahasrāni dasa varsaś-atāni ca/

bharatṛbhih sahitah Śrīman Rāmo rjyamakarāyat//

It needs little imagination to understand that the above quoted Pāli verse is based on this Sanskrit śloka from the sixth book. The expression daśa varṣasahasrāṇi has been kept intact. The second part of the first line saṭṭhi vassasatāni ca too, agrees with that sanskrit śloka with the difference, that instead of daśa, as in the Rāmāyaṇa we get saṭṭhi. Now, if we remember the predilection of the Jātaka poets, for the term 'sixteen' we can very well understand why Rāma has been described as having reigned for sixteen thousand years, instead of eleven, as in the Rāmāyaṇa. Of course, the reign-period of Rāma as given in both the epics and the Daśaratha Jātaka, is clearly fantastic, but that is not our concern here. What we desire to show, is the similarity of the spirit of that particular Pāli verse with the above quoted śloka from the Rāmāyaṇa. The second part of the second line of the Pāli verse, is an exact rendering of the Sanskrit expression Rāmo rājyamakārayat. And the first part of the second line viz., kambugīvo māhābahu, although absent in the above quoted sanskrit śloka, actually occurs elsewhere in the Rāmāyaṇa (of. vipulāṁso māhabāhuḥ kāmbugrīvo mahābahu). So we find the poet of this Jātaka is fully indebted to Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa so far as the above quoted Pāli verse is concerned. We have already seen that the Daśaratha Jātaka itself is almost a summary of the Ayōdhyākāṇḍa. Now, we want to go a little further to show that even in other places of the Jātaka, the Rāmāyaṇic influence is, by no means, rare. In the Jayadissa Jātaka (No. 513) we not only get a reference to the Daṇḍaka forest, but also to Rāma's fair-limbed mother ; and we are further told, how she had won salvation for her absent son when the latter sought the woods of Daṇḍaka. Any reader who is intimately familiar with the Rāmāyaṇa will not fail to discern that the poet of the Jātaka here, has faithfully followed the 25th. chapter of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa, where we find Kauśalyā, the mother of Rāma, invoking the gods to protect her son from animals and goblins in the forest. Names of some of the gods invoked by Kauśalyā in the Rāmāyaṇa also occur in this Jātaka viz., those of Soma,

Varuṇa and Sūrya. It is significant to note that like the Rāmāyaṇa passage we find in the Jātaka verse the epithet Rājā applied to Varuṇa. A careful comparison of the relevant passages of the Jayadissa Jātaka and the above mentioned chapter of the second book of the lesser epic leaves no room to doubt that the Pāli poet was definitely familiar with the chapter concerning Kauśalyā's propitiation of the various gods.

A few other minor personalities, mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa, also occur in the various Jātakas. In this connection mention may be made of thousand-armed Arjuṇa, king Sagara and Nalakūbara. whose mistress Rambhā was violated by Rāvaṇa. Arjuṇa and Nalakūbara appear in the last book of the Rāmāyaṇa viz., the Uttarākāṇḍa. The story of 1000 armed Arjuṇa is more elaborately told in the Mahābhārata the Jātakas contain a few reference to him and his death at the hands of a Brāhmaṇa. Regarding Nalakūbara the Rāmāyaṇa (VII. ch. 26) informs us that his mistress was violated by the demon Rāvaṇa. But in the Jātakas his role is reversed. Here he is painted as enjoying the wife of another person (No. 327). The verse regarding king Sagara runs as follows—

yo Sāgarantaṁ Sāgaro Vijitvā/
yupaṁ subhaṁ soṇṇamayaṁ ulāraṁ.//

The verse shows that the Pāli poet had a perfect knowledge of the Sagara story, as described in both the epics. Some other ancient kings mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa like Bhagīratha, Dilīpa also appear in the Jātakas. The name Bhāgīrathī applied to Gaṅgā occurs in a Pāli verse which shows that the legend of Bhagīratha was not unknown to the Pāli poet.

The earliest extant non-canonical literary Śvetāmbara work appears to be the Paumacariyaṁ of Vimala the Jain Rāmāyaṇa, written according to the testimony of the poet himself, 530 years after the emancipation (siddhi) of lord Mahāvīra. There is absolutely no reason why this date for the composition of this text should not be accepted as genuine. If this date is accepted, then we have to assign this work to the lst. century A. D. and there is nothing in the body of this text that goes against this date.

The celebrated poem of Vimala is also known as Rāghavacaritam. From a few verse of the second chapter we can understand his attitude towards the Brāhmaṇical Rāma story (obviously that represented by Vālmīki). We are giving below a free translation of those lines—"When I consider the Padmacarita, I wonder how the petty and insignificant monkeys could kill the powerful and aristocratic Rāksasas, who were versed in different scienes and who had complete faith in the Jainas. We are further told by the native chronicler (apparently Vālmīki) that all the Rākṣasas, including Rāvaṇa, used to consume flesh, fat and blood. We further learn that Rāvaṇa's illustrious and valiant brother Kumbhakarṇa used to have an undisturbed sleep for six months. Even if he where hit by big hills, even he could not awakened, he remained asleep even if his ears were filled with jars of oil, loud sounds of drums, with could pierce thunder, had no effect on him. And when he used to awake, he felt so hungry that he could serenely swallow elephants, buffaloes and anything that came in his way. After consuming gods, men, elephants, he used to go to sleep once more for six months. We have further heard that Rāvaṇa, after vanquishing Indra in the battlefield, brought him in chain to the city of Laṅkā. But who can conquer the mighty Indra, who is capable of uprooting the whole of Jambudwīpa, who has Airāvata as his vāhana and the terrible vajra as his weapon ? By his very thought, he (i.e., Indra) can reduce to ashes any god or man. The dear killed the lion, and dog, the elephant, such contradictory sentences are found everywhere in the Rāmāyaṇa."

We have deliberately reproduced this long passage in order to show the deep familiarity, Vimala had, with the original Rāmāyaṇa, ascribed to Vālmīki. Not only has he referred to the work of Vālmīki by name, but at the same time he has mentioned events, described in the original version, using almost the same language. What he has said about Kumbhakarṇa and his undisturbed sleep for six months, are actually found in the Rāmāyaṇa, VI. 60.27-63 and VI 61. 28. There is absolutely no doubt that Vimala is indebted to the original Rāmāyaṇa so far as

the above-mentioned passages of his work are concerned. As a devout Jain and a firm believer in the doctrine of Ahiṁsā, he is not prepared to believe that the Rākṣasas of Laṅkā used to consume animal flesh. They are everywhere delineated in his work as Vidyādharas, although sometimes he forgetfully calls them also Rākṣasas (of. 2.105 ; 7.92 etc.).

These so-called Vidyādharas, led by Rāvaṇa, are every where portrayed as staunch Jainas. Although Vimala is committed to writing the story of Padma (i.e. Rāma), his, actual hero, at least in the first half at his work, is Rāvaṇa, who like Naravāhanadatta, appears in this poem as perfect knight-errant. As a matter of fact, the ghost of Naravāhanadatta looms large in all the literary works beginning from Vimalasūri down to Hemacandra.

We have already seen that Vimala had a thorough knowledge not only of the events, narrated in the original Rāmāyaṇa, but also with its language. Although he contemptuously bestows on the earlier poets epithets like kukavi, mūḍhaḥ etc., he actually follows the path trodden by them. Sometimes he does not hesitate to borrow words and phrases of the original Rāmāyaṇa. However, while telling the story of Rāma and Rāvaṇa, he also tells something about different Jain Tirthankaras and other interesting details are also found in his work, for which he is indebted to none, but his own imagination.

The main details of Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa viz. the birth of the four sons of Daśaratha, Rāma's marriage with Sītā, the daughter of Janaka, his departure for the forest along with Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā, Rāvaṇa's kidnapping of Sītā, death of Jatāyū at Rāvaṇa's hand, Rāma's meeting with Sugrīva, Hanumān's departure for Laṅkā, his meeting with Sītā, the battle of Laṅkā, the rescue and ultimate banishment of Sītā—are all described in Vimala's poem. But mere similarity of broad facts do not concern us much here. After a thorough examination of the entire Prākrit poem of Vimala we have been able to find out a very good number of small yet important details which also occur in the original Rāmāyaṇa. We are giving below those details side by side from the two poems—

Paumacariyaṁ	Rāmāyaṇa
1. Description of Rājagrha (2.8-14)	1. Description of Ayodhyā (1,ch.5)
2. Rāvaṇa's encounter with Vālin and lifting of Kailāsa (9.24ff.)	2. VII. ch. 34; VII, 16.25ff.
3. Description of the Narmadā (10.29ff)	3. VII. 31.15.ff.
4. Sahasrakiraṇa's play in the water of the Narmadā (10.33ff)	4. VII, 32.2 ff. (in this epic he is called Arjuṇa of *Sahasra* hands
5. Rāvaṇa's worship of the Jaina image near the bank of the Narmadā (10.45ff)	5. VII. 31.37 ff. (he is shown as worshipping the Śivaliṅga)
6. Nalakūbara-Uparambha-Rāvaṇa affair (12.38ff)	6. VII. ch. 26 (the heroine is here Rambhā).
7. Indra-Rāvaṇa encounter (12.73ff)	7. VII. ch. 29
8. Añjaṇā-Pavanañjaya love affair and birth of Hanumat (chs.15-17)	8. VII. ch. 35.
9. Rāvaṇa-Varuṇa encounter (ch.19)	9. VII. ch. 23.
10. Killing of Śambuka (43.48ff)	10. VII. ch. 76.
11. Khara-Duṣāṇa and their 14,000 associates (43.17 : 44.11)	11. III. chs. 19-20.
12. Candranakhā's amorous advances (43.37ff)	12. Śūrpaṇākhā affair (iii,ch.17)
13. Rāma's lament (45.51ff)	13. III. chs. 62 f.
14. Sugrīva severely rebuked by Lakṣmaṇa (48.7ff)	14. IV. ch. 34
15. Dadhimukha affair (ch.49)	15. V. ch. 62.

16. Sītā gives Hanumat the Cūḍāmaṇi (53.72 ff)	16. V. ch, 38 f.
17. Hanumat overpowered by Indrajit (53.118f)	17. V. ch. 48.
18. Hanumat returns to Rāma the Cuḍāmaṇi given by Sītā (5413ff.)	18. V. ch. 65.
19. Indrajit's quarrel with Bibhīṣaṇa (55.8ff)	19. VI. ch. 15.
20. Rāvaṇa's quarrel with Bībhīṣaṇa (55.18ff)	20. VI. ch. 16.
21. Doubts raised in Rāma's camp about Bibhīṣaṇa (55.29ff)	21. VI. ch. 17.
22. Rāma's lament (after Lakṣmaṇa was hit by Rāvaṇa's Śaktiśela (62.4ff).	22.. VI. ch. 101.
23. Description of Mathurā (88.2ff)	23. VII. 70. 9. ff.
24. Rāma becomes a target of hostile criticism at Ayodhyā (93.22ff)	24. VII. 43, 16ff.
25. Sītā's lament in the forest (94.87ff)	25. VII. 48 ff.

The above table shows that Vimala has very faithfully followed in his Prākrit poem the original Rāmāyaṇa including its first and seventh books, which are considered late additions to the original poem. A very good number of incidents, narrated in the Uttarākāṇḍa, have been recorded by the author, of the Paumacariyaṁ. We have, for example, in this poem the story of Maruttā's yajña, even the name 'Maruttā' priest Samvarta is mantioned by Vimala (11.71). Vimala, to whom Rāvaṇa is a great Jain and Vidyādhara, has cleverly changed the passages of the Uttarākaṇḍa, which describe Rāvaṇa's discomfiture. As for example, in the Uttarākāṇḍa story Arjuṇa, king of Māhiṣmati, is represented as having made

Rāvaṇa his prisoner; but the *Paumacariyam* just gives the opposite version. In another Uttarākāṇḍa story Rāvaṇa is shown as having suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of Vālin; but in the *Paumacariyam* Vālin appears as a Jain ascetic and is further shown as having pressed the mount Kailāsa with the finger of his feet, when Rāvaṇa had lifted that mount and Daśamukha, in utter distress, cried out and earned the name of Rāvaṇa. It is not little amusing to see how the Jain poet has cleverly assigned to Vālin the role of Śiva of the Uttarākāṇḍa (16.25-38). Let no one suppose from this that Vimala has here followed a different tradition, and not that recorded by the author of the Rāmāyaṇa.

The above discussion abundantly proves that this Jain author writing in the 1st. century A. D., has deliberately followed the original Rāma story, although, here and there, he has shown his Jain bias. Characters like Daśaratha, Bharata, Kumbhakarṇa, Indrajit and others are represented as embracing the ascetic life in this poem, but Lakṣmaṇa, in this Jain epic, is represented as taking a more important part in the battle of Laṅkā than Rāma. But Vimala has done a grave injustice to this great brother of Rāma by representing him as a love-sick sentimental hero.

The work of Vamala is the foundation on which later Jain writers built lofty edifices. We have the Padma Purāṇa of Digambara Raviṣeṇā (7th century). A number of other writers, including Svayambhū, also wrote on the Rāma story.

The Padma Purāṇa or Padmacarita is a free and direct Sanskrit translation of Prākrit text of Vimala. However, nowhere in the text Raviṣeṇā cares to acknowledge his debt to the earlier and original poet. He simply states that he followed the work of Anuttaravāgmin who, according to Svayambhū, was identical with Kīrtidhara. But no work of Kīrtidhara is known. We can understand the reason why Raviṣeṇā has not mentioned Vimala in his work ; the former was a diehard Digambara and the latter was a Śvētāmbara poet. It appears that before Raviṣeṇā, one Kīrtidhara made an attempt to translate in sanskrit the prākrit kāvya of Vimala. However, the popularity of Raviṣeṇā's work

forced the poem of Kīrtidhara to disappear from the literary scenes. Although Raviṣeṇā is a mere translator, we have to concede that he was endowed with a genuine poetical fervour. The Padma Purāṇa is an exceedingly popular work among the Digambara Jainas. That Raviṣṇā was a lerned poet, is also evident form various chapters of his work. The easy graceful style of Raviṣeṇā is also responsible for his extreme popularity. Later poets like Udyotanasūri, the author of the Kuvalyamālā (Śaka 700) and Jinasena, the author of the Harivaṁśapurāṇa (Śaka 705) refer to Raviṣeṇā with love and deference. Since Padma Purāṇa is a mere translation of the Paumacariyaṁ, it is useless to discuss the contents of the poem.

Svayambhū, like Vimala and Raviṣeṇā, wrote on the Rāma story. The name of his work is Paumacariyaṁ which is written in the Apabhraṁśa language. In the very opening stanza of the first Sandhi of his work the poet declares that he has taken on hand to narrate the Rāma story after keeping in view the Ārṣa. The colophons of all the Parvans of Raviṣeṇā's Padma Purāṇa begin with it—ityāreṣ Śrī Raviṣeṇācāryaprokte Padma Purāṇa. This makes it clear that Svayambhū's reference pertains to that work. Elsewhere in Svayambhūs' work (1. 2. 9) we are told that he has embarked upon such a vast theme through the favour of Ācārya Raviṣeṇā.

The Ramayana the Source of Indian Poetics

Bhabani Gopal Sanyal

It has been described in the Rāmāyaṇa that Vālmīki was leisurely roaming in the forest, by the river Tamasā. He was absorbed by the charm of the forest, its beauty and life. At this time a cruel hunter, inimical to the birds of the forest, killed without any reason the mate Crouncha and separated him for ever from his female beloved. The female bird's lamentation made the forest vocal. Vālmīki was seized with deep pity. A śloka or couplet spontaneously came out of his inner mind. It was a terrible curse against that hunter. He would never get the calm of his mind throughout his life. He would be alienated from life. The sage became thoughtful because he did not know the nature and objective of his śloka. What might be the purpose and finality of the śloka which he had uttered. From this meditation of the sage started the poetics. This was the basis of the subsequent development of Indian poetics. When the creator of the Universe appeared before Vālmīki he could not resist the recital of his śloka. Brahmā was pleased to request the sage to compose the Rāmāyaṇa. This would be the poetic biography of Rāma. The sage decided that he would compose his poem in rhyme—

Udārabṛttārtha padai monoramai
Stadāsya Rāmasya chakāra Kīrittimān .

Every śloka of his poem would be charming. This charm has been explained by Bharata as Śleṣa (coalescence of words), Prasāda (clearness), Samatā (Evenness) and Samādhi (Super imposition of something distinct).

It may be mentioned that Vālmīki had put more stress on form than content. He would narrate the glory of Rāma and this

would be the content of his poem. But Vālmīki has not explained that the form is conditioned by content.

Tolstoy in his book, 'What is Art ?' said that the content of the work should be of importance to mankind. The poet should create by an inner need and not by external inducement. The form should be clear so that the people may appreciate the work.

Rabindranath said that the content is no more than an ingredient, the main thing is the form. The ideas of Keats' poem 'Ode to a Nightingale' are sickly but its form is beautiful. In the past the Greek thinker Longinus said that to attain sublimity in poetic creation the necessary things are great content, diction and intensity of emotion.

Vālmīki has utilised different Rasas in his epical poem. But he has mentioned in his Ādikāṇḍa, Rasas of six kinds.

Rasaiḥ-Śṛñgāra-Karuṇa-Hāsya-Roudra Bhāyanakaiḥ.

Virādibhiḥ Rasairyuktaṃ Kavyametadgāyatām.

The above mentioned Rasas can be explained in English as the Erotic, the Pathetic, the Comic, the Furious, the Terrible, and the Heroic. Bharata, the exponent of dramaturgy, has mentioned Rasas four in number, Viz, Śṛñgāra, Roudra, Vira and Bībhatsa (The Disgusting). According to him the other four Rasas proceed from these as follows :—Hāsya from Śṛñgāra, Karuṇa from Roudra, Adbhuta (the marvellous) from Vīra and Bhayānaka from Bībhatsa.

Similarly he has explained eight Sthāyi-bhāvas or permanent moods, corresponding to the eight Rasas. They are Rati (Love), Hāsa (Mirth), Krodha (Anger), Utsāha (Courage), Bhaya (Fear), Jugupsā (Aversion), Vismaya (Wonder), and Śoka (Sorrow). He has mentioned Vyabhicāri-bhāvas, thirty-three in number like Nirveda (self-disparagement), Glāni (debility), Sankā (apprehension), Asūyā (envy), etc.

Vālmīki has not mentioned Bībhatsa and Adhbhuta Rasas. The Adhbhuta Rasa, Viśwanāth has explained as a sense of wonder which w.dens our mind. The essence of Rasas is wonder and this may be called. Adhbhuta Rasa. One can reasonably conclude that Bharata has been influenced by Vālmīki's description of

Rasas of six kinds. Bharata has explained and expanded what Vālmīki had stated.

The basic Rasa of the Rāmāyaṇa is Karuṇ or the pathetic. The story of the cruel hunter and the female bird's lamentation swelled up the karuṇ rasa in Vālmīki's mind. Further events developed it. In the epic we read how Rāvaṇa stole away Sītā and effected separation from his beloved. The story of Craunca is nothing but an allegory which brings the inner story to prominence. Later on we read that Rāmacandra's departure to the forest, king Daśaratha and the queen Kauśayā's loud lamentation, Daśaratha's death due to estrangement from his son, the city of Ayodhyā's desolate condition and the sorrows of the people, the forcible seizure of Sītā by Rāvaṇa and Rāma's deep agony, etc. have deepened the flow of karuṇa Rasa.

Karuṇa would have been unbearable in Sītā's passage into the shelter of the mother earth, Urania, had it not been explained to the angry Rāma that he and Sītā are in fact Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī of the heaven and all events have been designed beforehand.

Besides, karuṇa the Vīra rasa, has also received due importance in the epic. When Sītā was presented to Rāma, after the assasination of Rāvaṇa, the reaction of Rāma was just like a man suffering from eye disease unable to bear the bright flame of a lamp. He expressed his satisfaction for his victory where his manliness has been proved and he explained his unwillingless to greet and accept her.

Kaḥ pumānstu kule jātaḥ striyaṃ paragṛhoṣitām.

Tejasvī punarāddyat suhrillovena chetasā.

The wife who has long lived in another man's residence cannot be accepted by the heroic man for his pleasure.

Before their departure to the forest, Lakṣmaṇa sharply rebuked his father for his indulgence in his love for Kaikeyī and his unwise action. He was prepared to kill his dotard father enslaved by youthful charm of Kaikeyī. Lakṣmaṇa proudly uttered :

Aham tabahs mahārāje pitrivam lopakshaye.

Bhrata bhartā cha bandhusoha pitā camamā Rāghavah.

He Said : Hanishye Pitaram briddhamy Kaikaya-Sakta manasam.

Rāma tried to pacify his anger by uttering moral maxims but he was furious like a serpent.

Niśaśvasa mahāsarpaḥ Vilastha iba roṣitā.

His utterances expressed his anger mixed with karuṇa. Thus his pathetic words were marged into anger, just to enthuse the mind of the feelings of readers. He cannot tolerate any injustice.

Notsāhe sahitum vira tatrame kshantumarhasi.

Bharata explained his mother's conduct to the sage Bharadwāja and his anger was manifested.

Krodhanāma kṛata prāgnam driptām suvagamaninīm.
Aisaryakamam Kaikeyimanāryāmāryarupinim.
Mamaitam matāram biddhi nrisaṇsām papanischayām.
Yato mulam hi pasyāmi vyasanam mahādātāmanah.

In the Rāmāyaṇa we also come across hāsya rasa (The Comic). Hanumāna saw Mondōdarī in Laṅkā bedecked with ornaments and also in the bloom of her youthful beauty. He thought that she must be Sītā and was full of unbounded joy for his recognition.

Asfotayamāsa chuchumbo puchham
Nananda chikriḍa jogou-jagama
Stamvāṅr ohannipata bhumou
Nridarsayan svām prakritim kapīnām.

Hanumāna elated with joy climbed the pillars and fell down on the floor, again got upon the pillars, kissed his tail, yelled and expressed the nature of a monkey. This frolicsome comics have been made enjoyable because the poet has described the natural behaviour of the monkey.

When the monkey got news of Sītā, he entered into Sugrība's orchard and were full of frolics.

Gayānti kecht prahasanti kechit
Nṛtanti kechit pranamanti kechit
Pathanti kechit pracharanti kechit
Plabanti kechit Pralapanti kechit.

As the poet has followed keenly the nature of monkeys, the picture has become enjoyable. What gives us relish is the descrip-

tion of the erotic Rasa. The story of Rāma and Sītā has moved around this. They are made for each other. Sītā is determined to follow Rāma in the forest, because a moment of separation is unbearable to her. 'Yastavya saha sa sargo nirayo yastavya binā'. Rām embraced Sītā and said, I do not desire the bliss of heaven by hurting your feelings. I am not afraid of any body, even Brahmā.

Vālmīki indeed is the poet of rainy season. Kālidāsa also has described it and has equated the season with human life. In the Ṛitusamhāra he has described the season as the basis of Śṛṅgara rasa and also as the promoter of feelings—udīpana-bibhava. But he has described it as the fulfillment of passions than of the sorrow of separation.

In Vālmīki the rainy season has deepened the feelings of separation (Bipralambha). The sorrows of heaven have been under lined with Rāma's feelings of painful separation with Sītā. In the rainy season the sense of separation is intense. The sorrows of the sky symbolised as Rāma's grief have passed in to Rāma's character.

Esa dharma pariclista nababāriparipluta.
Siteba śokasantapta mahi bāspam bimunchati.

The earth bathed in water of the season is lamenting like Sītā overwhelmed with grief.

Mahābhārata is the epic of śānta rasa. Though in the Rāmāyaṇa this has not been discussed. Yet it is found here :

Nā kartā kasyachit karchitniyoga napi chesvary
Swavabe bartate lokastasya kalay parayanam
Nā kalay kalambytiṣ na kalay parihiyate
Swavabancha samasaydya na krinichidate bartatē.

Nobody is the master of his action and no one appoints anybody in work. Everyman is controlled by fate to do his work.

Vālmīki is really the poet of poets for his apt application of Upamā (simile), Rūpaka (metaphor) and Svabhābokti (natural description). He is faultless in his application of figures of speech. In the description of battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa the poet has said that they fought just like their own

characters, 'Rām-Rāvaṇayo yuddham Rāmaa-Rāvaṇayoriba'.

Kālidāsa's reputation is great for the apt use of simile. Here he has been influenced by Vālmīki. The latter's mental pride is great for his use of similes. He has made his ideas meaningful by the significant use of similes. He has described the autumnal season and the image is really beautiful. He has written :

Jyostnā tusāramalinea paurnamāsyam na rajate.
Siteb chatapshyama laksyate na Sovate.

The moon light has become pallid due to frost. Rāma thinks of Sitā, she also looks pale and her beauty appears to be covered with a screen.

Vālmīki is never tired in his description. Similes crowd together and they form a garland. So he has not depicted the sensuous pictures of beauty only. Through his imagery he has communicated the underlying meaning. The essence of poetry lies in Dhvani or suggestive meaning. It is therefore that this innermeaning becomes manifest by his use of imagery. *They* spring from the creative impulse.

In poetry the meaning and the sound are one. Bradley has described it as a resonant or meaning in resonance. He has said that in the best poetry and not only the best, there floats an atmosphere of infinite suggestion. The poet speaks to us of one thing, but in this one thing there seems to lurk the secret of all.

Vālmīki's imagery, flow out of his mind without any conscious effort on his part. They come 'as apṛthag yatna nirvatyaḥ' and they help the expression of rasa. In the spring, Rāma saw the effulgent beauty of Pampā Sarobara and this excited his painful sense of separation from Sītā. The beauty of the lake and its surroundings are responsible for the deep sorrow in the mind of Rāma.

Esa karandabah pakshi bighaya salilam suvam.
Ramate kantaya sardhyam kamamuddi paynniba.

The wanderings of the bird karandaba with his beloved excited passionate longings in the mind of Rāma.

Kālidāsa is famous for the use of similes. Here also he has been influenced by Vālmīki. The sage poet had a great attraction

towards the use of similes. His similes have more than decorative values. They explain his ideas and the atmosphere gives us a deeper meaning than what he has expressed by words. His imagery have become beautiful when he describes the Autumn. Vālmīkiis never tired in the use of similes. He has woven a garland by the profuse use of similes.

From this a reader may easily conclude that his similes are more than sensuous pictures. The essence of poetry lies in Dhvani. That is the suggestive meaning. Bharata fails to bring his brother Rāma back to Ayodhyā. When he returned he saw Ayodhyā in a desolate condition. This spoke of the absence of Rāma and Sītā. When the moon is in eclipse then Rohiṅī is found in her pallid beauty. Ayodhyā looked just like Rohiṇī deprived of her beauty. Aydohyā was as if an altar of yagña when it has been done. The altar looks empty and the priest also is absent. The city was like a forest creeper drooping lustreless where the bees once hummed sweetly. That place has become mute. Its beauty has faded. Similes of Vālmīki cluster to his mind without any effort on his part. They have become helpful to express rasas.

In the Uttarākāṇḍa,, Śatrughna heard the story of Rāma in lyrics in the hermitage of Vālmīki. The song was full of reasonant music. The music came out of different places of body and was extremely sweet to hear.

The sage Bharata was born either in the second centry B. C. or A. D. He was the author of *Natyasastra.* It would not be proper to place him after the 6th century. A.D. Dr. S. K. De states that the poetics of drama had a separate existence other than theprinciples of poetry., Subsequently these two streams merged into one. According to Bharata poetry is drama. Bharata has said that poetry has the character of a drama and the latter is known as Rūpaka, ten in number.

The characters of people full of happiness and sorrow find expression through dramatic performance. Bharata has given adeguate importance to the dramatic performance. just like the composition of a drama itself. That the drama is the representation of life has been explained by Bharata. The function of

drama is to reveal human life having currents of pleasure and sufferings. The Rāmāyaṇa is the poetry of life.

So it appears that Bharata has been inspired by the Rāmāyaṇa. The variegated aspects of life have been shown, with the cooperation of various rasas. To reveal life, not in an imitative manner, is the function of drama. When Aristotle explains tragedy, he says that its aim is to reveal the truth, that is, the significance of life. Bharata has said in his Nātyaśāstra :

'Nripatinānn yacchārritam nānā rasobhāva chestitam bahudā.'

The characters of the kings should be described with various rasas. When happiness and misery are shown that is called drama. So life in various aspects are depicted in a drama.

Rasa is revealed out of action. The stress is put on rasa and life in action, in the moving cycle of happiness and sufferings. Thomas Becket has said in *Murder in the Cathderal.*

"They know and do not know, that action is suffering and suffering is action."

So, the wheel turns, till it comes to the still-point. To show life in its entirety is the function of a drama. Action reveals the qualities of the hero's character and thought.

In the Rāmāyaṇa the existence of happiness is brief but sufferings have a major role. Ānandavardhana has said that even inanimate objects endowed with rasas, become beautiful. They give the readers the taste of pleasure[3].

According to Bharata poetry is firmly established with the extension of drama. Later, the exponents of Dhvani theory have described rasa as the sout of drama. It is natural because poetics was different from dramaturgy. But Abihnavagupta has said that poetry is on the same plane with the popular drama.

Bharata has said that rasa becomes manifest with the cooperation of Bibhāva, Anubhāv, and Byābhichari moods. No subject can be introduced which does not reveal any rasa. Bharata's defination of rasa is brief and succint. He has also said about eight permanent moods and also of corresponding rasas. But Vālmīki has depicted six rasas. Bharata has explained the function of Vyābhichari bhāvas, thirty-three in number. They are auxilaries of permanent bhāvas, known as

Sthāyī. The latter has two aspects. Ālambana and uddīpana. Rāma and Sītā are dependent on each other. In their exile, the beauty of the forest excites their longings.,

Bharata has mentioned four figures of speech. They embellish poetry. They are Upamā, Rūpaka, Dīpana and Yamaka. Later Bhāmaha added more. Bharata has discussed ten qualities and ten blemises of poetry. No doubt he has been influenced by the Rāmāyaṇa where we find Guṇas like Śleṣa, Ojaḥ, Kānti etc.

Diction must be simple, clear and expressive. There must be no circumlocution. We find these merits in the Rāmāyaṇa. There must not be any meanness in diction and Aristotle has advised the use of strange words, metaphors and lengthened forms. Longinus has mentioned as defects, tumidity (Swollen), Puerility (meaningless grandeur) and parenthyrsus (hollowemotion).

The exponent of rasa theory is Bharata. In the succeeding ages different commentators have interpreted his theory. In this connection the names of Bhaṭṭalollata. Bhatta Śankuka may be mentioned. The name of Abhinaba gupta may be specially mentioned for his Abhibyaktibāda. In brief his theory is that our consciousness has three aspects. But they are covered by ignorance. When the screen is lifted from the aspect of joy, then consciousness is free. We then feel unbounded joy. This free consciousness is rasa.

In interpreting Dhanibāda, Ānandavardhana has referred to the Rāmāyaṇa. In the two epics, the sympathetic readers (fit audience let me find though few said Wordsworth) easily find out the use of Dhvani. Ānandavardhana has said that in the past, the first poet's sympathy and sense of grief found expression in his ślokas.

Kāvyasyatmas a ebarthastatha chadīkaveh purā
Crouncha dvanda viyogothla sokah ślokattamagatah.

Just as water wells out from the pitcher full to the brim, similarly Vālmīki's grief was the overflow of his feelings. The permanent mood regulated by rhyme was expressed in his śloka. The permanent mood was the intense grief of the male bird for the death of his companion. The crouncha, immersed in grief was

bibhāva, his lamentation was anubhāva and these turned the sage's grief into karuṇa rasa. This grief was not earth bound but beyond it.

Dhvani is the soul of poetry. The evocative power of words and meaning, guṇa and figures turn expression into rasa. It is never done by mere description. In this case the necessity of suggestive meaning is great. Rasa is helped to be expressed by means of this suggestive meaning.

The relation between the ordinary meaning of the sentence and the suggestive meaning is deep. In the poetry of great poets we find the meaning of meaning. This suggestive meaning is expressed by the help of literal meaning that is the ordinary meaning of the sentence. He who wants to lit up a lamp must be careful about the lamp itself.

Ālokarthi yathā deep-sikhāyam yatnabān janah
Tadupāytayā tadbadārthe bāchye tadadritah.

From this śloka we understand that he who wants the suggestive meaning must be careful about the ordinary meaning of the sentence. When the meaning is understood then the suggestive meaning is revealed to mind.

Poetry has been divided into three categories e.g. Dhvani kābya, guṇivut vyaṅgya kābya and cahitra kābya. Ānandavardhana has said in his Dhvanyāloka that the learned called that particular kind of poetry Dhvani in which the expressed word and sense subordinating themselves manifest the suggsted sense. The second class of poetry is called guṇibhūta vyāṅgya kābya because here the suggested sense is subordinate. In the third class of poetry we notice that the suggested sense is of the lowest kind. This is citra or pictorial poetry.

In Rabindranath's poetry influence of Kālidāsa no doubt is great. Yet the Rāmāyaṇa has influenced his poetics and his outlook on life. It is, therefore, we find in his poetry the influence of tradition which is pastness of the past.

The Rāmāyaṇa does not depict to justify the ways of god to men. In this poem the value of man has been recognized. To the question of Vālmīki, Nārada, the divine sage has said that in Rāma various qualities have found refuge. These

qualities even cannot be seen among the gods. So the Rāmāyaṇa is the story of a great man's excellence.

Some of the western critics have said that the character of Rāma has been exaggerated. This kind of complaint can not be entertained. What is real to a man may be untrue to another. The Rāmāyaṇa is the soul of India. It depicts the throb of life. This epic is at once poetry, history and the scripture.

Rabindranath has discussed about the method of criticism in relation to Rāmāyaṇa. According to him the proper criticism is the devotional interpretation. In his way the devotion of one's heart is communicated to another. Rabindranath has written in his introduction to the Rāmāyaṇa that the real criticism is worship. The critic is a devotional priest. He expresses his divotional wonder to all. According to him the function of a critic is to interpret the meaning of a work, like the Rāmāyaṇa with devotion in his heart. He is to communicate his interpretation to the hearts of all. Analytical criticism cannot be defended because it separates the ingredients of a literary output. Finally, he has opined that the must remember that the Rāmāyaṇa helps us to understand our country, India and in its light to go deep into the importance of the epic.

In this connection we may mention T. S, Eliot's 'The function of criticism'. He said earlier that true criticism is the elucidation of works of art and the correction of taste. But later he corrected his previous opinion and said that to promote the understanding and enjoyment of literature is the function of art. These are interrelated. We do not fully enjoy a poem unless we understand it, and on the other hand, it is equally true that we do not fully understand a poem unless we enjoy it.

It may be said that analytical criticism has its necessity and equally important is the comparative study.

In the Rāmāyaṇa the idea of the fullness of life has been revealed. People of India have accepted it as the truth of life. Vālmīki has interpreted this ideal of fullness that is the totality of life. Rabindranath said that in the total acceptance of life all partial things are harmonised and we go into "the still-point of the running world." The feelings of brotherhood, attache-

ment to truth, loyalty of the married life, devotion to master have been the explained as ideals of life. They satisfy our cravings for a fuller life.

In a poem of Rabindranath, diction and rhyme (Bhāṣā and Chanda) it has been described that sage Vālmīki was full of extraordinary anxiety because of his divine poetic inspiration. In him was born a deep craving. for expression. The sage could not understand the purpose of his poetic inspiration. This was of ecstasy at the same time of deep pain, which was nothing but his anxiety for fullness of expression. Behind the creation lies deep meditation and suffering and therefore in the case of a poet we find conscious awakening. The gift of god like the flame of fire shoots upward and consumes mind. The poet has to be busy in his act of creation by consuming his inmost life like incense.

Vālmīki has compared poetic diction and music of rhyme. A man's use of language is confined within everyday life. The language performs its function by the use of apparent meaning. This has a controlling effect on language. It is therefore that this language serves the purpose of a man. Its meaning encircles human thought. It is therefore that the meaning of language cannot like music rush upward, "from the sphere of our sorrow". But language when it is coupled with rhyme is able to transcend the earth. So the sage has said that he shall harmonise the language with rhyme. It will therefore be able to swim beyond the earthly boundary.

Vālmīki has compared the poetic diction to fire. The significance here is of the meaning beyond meaning. Diction and rhymthical language can uplift the emotional feelings into the heavenly life.

Another characteristic of poetry has been made clear by the explanation of Nārada. .He has made distinction between realily and poetic truth. What the poet realises intutively is absolute truth. This is done by the cooperation of imagination and emotion. Vālmīki relates to Nārada about the qualities of his hero to be revealed in the epical poem. Nārada points out to Rāma of Ayodhyā. His character has endowed the epic

with a new significance. A real hero should dwell in fear in prosperity, bold in danger and embraces deep sorrows of the earth and mankind with humility.

1. Sanskrit Poetics, Page-2
2. This is also said by Aristotel in Poetics.
3. In the depiction of the characters of gods and the goddesses there is special reason of disparagement of Rasa. Because there cannot be any bond of sympathy for them on the part of human beings. (Bankimchandra : Vivida Prabandha)
4. Tolstoy has explained the value of Christian Art. His ideal is brotherhood and unity and sympathy and faith in God and neighbours. Only art of this kind can be in our time be acknowledged to be good art. (What is Art, page-239)

The Murder of Vali : A question Re-considered

Haripada Chakraborty

"Samagra-rūpiṇī Lakṣmī Kamekaṃ Sanshritā naram"—Who is that human being in whom the unfragmented whole of Lakṣmī, the goddess of wealth and beauty, has incarnated ? This the sage Vālmīki wanted to know from the divine sage Nārada.

Rabindranath points out that : "The Rāmāyaṇa is the profile of that person with great excellence, not the story of a god. In the Rāmāyaṇa the god has not cut himself short to become a man, but it is a man who has excelled to become a divine being."

The classical, eternal literary creation Rāmāyaṇa is centred around that man, Rāmacandra, who resembles a god or who is rare even amongst gods. Even though endowed with all the qualities that go to make one excell in all respects, Rāmacandra is nevertheless a human-being, a person with human qualities also. And as such, a man is sure to have both excellence and imperfections, The sage Vālmīki has wonderfully stated : "He is a man with moon-like excellence !" The moon which contains the nectar-like light, the tenderly whitish elixir, has also some spots in it. But those spots do never go to reduce its exquisite beauty.

First poet has put into graphics in the profile of Rāma include three principal ones—the murder of Vālī, the divorce of Sītā and the beheading of Śambuka. Throughout the ages, these actions of the ideal man Rāmacandra—which might even be called cruel misdeeds without exaggeration have surprised, and pained all men, even those who are reverential readers of the Rāmāyaṇa.

Amongst the dark spots that have been specially ear-marked

in the character of Rāma, perhaps the darkest episode that has been pointedly marked is the murder of Vālī. The Mahābhārata has referred to Arjuna's comment after the killing of Droṇa that Droṇa's murder would be a perennial source of disgrace of Yudhiṣṭhira as has been the murder of Vālī by Rāmacandra. Doubtless, the killing of Vālī is an irremovable disgrace that has spotted Rāma's character. Throughout the ages critics have forcefully come out to assail or defend this action of Rāma in their respective estimates. We would keep this paper limited to four representative recensions of the Rāmāyaṇa of the North-eastern India and outside of India, written in four different languages —namely, Mādhava Kandalī's Rāmāyaṇa in Assamese, Kṛttibāsa's in Bengali, Sant Tulasīdāsa's Rāma-Carita-Mānasa in Hindi and Bhānubhakta's Rāmāyaṇa in Napalese language. All these four works are regarded as best literary creations in Assam, Bengal, North India and Nepal. Our efforts will certainly be directed towards enquiring the evolutionary course of the Rāma-story on the basis of Vālmīki's work in Sanskrit which is said to be the original source of all. Limitation from the point of view of places of origin of these works has been fixed as above. From the point of view of time this dissertation limits itself from circa 1300 A. D. to 1900 A. D. And if Vālmīki's Sanskrit work is taken into account the time-component will be spread over a period of 2200 years.

In Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa the story of Vālī includes the entire episode beginning with Rāma's first meeting with Sugrīva and ending with the death and cremation of Vālī (Kiṣkindhyā Kāṇḍa, Chapters one to twenty-five).

The main features of this story are similar in Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa and in all recensions, though minor differences are found here and there. We would discuss later the various differences found in the prior-mentioned four works that we have taken here as our root-reference. Before we do this, it is desireable that we introduce here two serious and relatively debatable points.

The first point is : if there were any *a priori* decision to kill Vālī by throwing an arrow from a distant spot, then what was the

necessity for testing Rāma's powers i.e. throwing of Dunduvi's skeleton and piercing the seven tāla trees or seven śāla trees ? Was there any apprehension that Vālī's stone-like hard chest might be too difficult to pierce and perforate ? Or, is it a fact, as mentioned in the original Rāmāyaṇa or old Rāma-story, that Rāma killed Vālī in a face-to-face combat ? Does not this question arise in different recensions of the Rāmāyaṇa in connection with different topics in different places ? In the Ādi Kāṇḍa (first section) of the Śaradā edition of the Rāmāyaṇa, such an information is found in the seed-words that accompanied by Rāma, Sugrīva went close to the Vālī's palace and started roaring. As angry Vālī came out, Rāma fought with him and killed him. Thereafter, Rāma enthroned Sugrīva as the king of Kiṣkindhyā (1/55).

Even in current editions of Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa one can find markedly manifest indication that there was a combat between Rāma and Vālī. After Vālī had been pierced by Rāma's arrow and fell down on earth, the semi-human (called vānara, monkey) partisans who fought on the side of Vālī told the queen Tārā prior to their retreat : "Oh lady with a living son ! Please retreat, save your son Añgada. The Death-like Rāma has killed Vālī, even though he fought with enormous stones and trees, Rāma's bolt-like arrow felled him down.

> "Jiva-putre nivartasva putram rakṣasva cāngadam
> Antako Rāma-rupeṇa hatvā mayati Vālīnam
> Kṣiptān brikṣān samāvidya bipulāśca tathā śilāḥ
> Vālī vajra-samair-bāṇair-vajreṇeva nipātitah"
>
> —4.19.11-12

The frightened Vānaras (semi-human) might have described the events erroneously due to fear. But even Hanumāna—who was physically present there and was a witness himself—has also described the events two times. On one occasion when he met Sītā in the Aśoka gardens of Rāvaṇa and on another occasion when he came to Ayōdhyā to meet Bharata. He said to Sītā : "Tāto nihatya tarasā Rāma Vālīnamāhave" etc.— "Then, in a combat Rāma swiftly killed Vālī." And he said to Bharata : "Rāmah sva-bahu-viryena svarājyam pratyapadayat,

Vālinaṃ samare hatvā mahā-kāyaṃ mahā-balam"—"After killing in a combat immensely strong Vālī of gigantic-frame by his own prowess, Rāma established his own kingdom" etc. (6.128.38). One can find similar statements in the Rāma-story quoted in the Mahābhārata.

These are not differences in readings. These are either wholly interpolations on both the stories—murder of Vālī by Rāma in a public combat or by throwing a dart from a hide-out—were current in public memory. Vālmīki might have accepted one version of the event, but that does not mean that the other version was completely absent and totally vanished from public memory. Our dissertation here would, however, be based on the current story that Rāma killed Vālī from a hide-out. Yet, we would like to raise a question here : if both the versions were current at the time, then why did Vālmīki choose that one which would make Rāma's character darkly spotted, which would raise a controversy about Rāma's greatness ? Is it because of the fact that a human character, however great that might be, would never be perfectly spotless ? Because if it be so, it could be unreal, impossible. No earrings can be made out of unalloyed gold—did this realistic attitude make Vālmīki to move in that direction or had he allegiance to some other nobler ideal ? One must take this question into consideration if he desires to make a right assessment of the literary creation.

The second question is concerned with the controversy raised in connection with the words : Sapta-śāla (seven śāla trees) and Sapta-tāla (seven Tāla trees). Both the words "śāla" and "Tāla" have been used by Vālmīki in the eleventh and twelfth cantos of Kiṣkindhyā Kāṇḍa (11.67 and 12.3, 12.4)

The word "tāla" only is found in all regional language-translations. The dictionary-meaning of 'śāla' is both a particular tree named 'śāla' and also, all trees in general. Therefore, it can be logically inferred that the tree referred to above is actually "tāla" or palm tree. In this context it would be proper to mention that in mythologies like Nṛisiṃha Purāṇa the piercing of seven trees has been allegorically used to create some images

of Fairy Tales and by the way some futuristic prophecies have been made. For example, it has been said that the man who would be able to pierce seven tāla trees by throwing one arrow only would be the slayer of Vālī. It has been mentioned in the Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa that there was a curse, and also a counter-curse behind the story. It has been said : once Vālī had kept a number of palm-fruits (tāla) in a particular cave of a hill. Seven palm fruits were found to have been stolen from that cave. Suspecting a particular serpent to be the stealer, Vālī cursed that the palm fruits will pierce the body of the serpent to grow into palm trees (tāla trees). Instantly came a counter-curse from that serpent : Vālī will be slayed by him who will pierce these seven palm trees.

Let us now come to the subject of arrow-hit Vālī's allegations and accusations against Rāma. Vālmīki has conscised these pre-death emotions of Vālī in words by 32 ślokas in the seventeenth canto of the Kiṣkindhyā Kāṇḍa (section). In these words one would find sufficient rational formulations and scriptural knowledge along with enormous amount of hate, wrath, surprise and sorrow.

In these ślokas it is clear that Vālī's allegations are : the actions that might justify killing of a person, Vālī had done none of them. He had not insulted Rāma, nor was he fighting with him ; he had not committed any sin in Rāma's kingdom ; flesh of the semi-human vānara is not edible, nor were his skin and hair usable ; no gold or silver was available in the infertile, forest-infested land of Vālī ; therefore, in these circumstances when he was in a quarrel with another person and was completely unaware of him, this killing was certainly a crime ; it was like the vile act of a serpent biting a sleeping man.

In reply to these invectives and sarcasm of Vālī, Rāmacandra says : the whole earth is under the domination of the Ikṣāvku Dynasty. Bharata is now the ruler. On his behalf Rāma had punished Vālī for sinful acts. What are those sins ? Vālī had kidnapped and raped his younger brother's wife who should have been treated like his daughter. A Kṣatriya cannot pardon or neglect this crime. If a Kṣatriya does so, then that sin falls upon the king himself.

Sugrīva is an ally whose enemy Rāma has vowed to kill. Killing could have been avoided by simply ordering Vālī to do the right thing, but when a crime or sinful act is punishable, then royal punishment only frees the sinner from the sin. Therefore, in full accordance with regal code of conduct Rāma has slayed Vālī.

Does a man murder the beasts, the birds and the fishes ? no. He just hunts them in various ways, secretly hiding behind. Nobody should feel any guilt for this act.

Vālī is a semi-human ape, in relations with whom there cannot arise the question of conforming to the Kṣatriyas' code of conduct.

Vālī has forgotten the real virtue, and as a result he is assailing the royal conduct. The kings are gods of the physical world. Invectives against them are crimes.

Vālī knew the religion of his fore-fathers, yet why has he become so outraged that he is blaming Rāma ; this is beyond Rāma's understanding.

After having compared Vālī's allegations and Rāma's reply, Ācārya Dineś Candra Sen has remarked : "what Rāmacandra has said in reply to these invectives of Vālī does not appear to have any special standing." (Vālī—Rāmāyaṇī-Kathā). But Vālmīki has said that "after having listened to Rāma's reply Vālī became convinced of what the true virtue was and therefore, he not only refrained from blaming Rāma further, but also confessed his own guilt and begged pardon for saying harsh words without properly realizing what Rāma had done. He agreed to accept his own inferiority and the justness of Rāma's conduct. Not only that, he spoke of protection and raising of Prince-Aṅgada, of Tārā, of his bequeating the Vānara kingdom to Sugrīva etc. and then declared that he was fortunate that he could die at the hands of Rāma ! "tvattohaṃ vadhamākānkṣan vāryamāṇopi tāraya" (20.59)—"Though Tārā prohibited me, I nevertheless came here with the desire that I should be killed by you."

It is apparent that there was an instantaneous volte-face in the attitude of Vālī as soon as he heard Rāma's reply. But the

posing the Ādi Kāṇḍa. In the current edition one can notice Śaṁkaradeva's self-introducing couplets.

In the Kiṣkindhyā Kāṇḍa the story of Vālī—beginning with meeting between Rāma and Sugrīva and ending with ritualistic cremation of Vālī has been told in 628 couplets. The Asura Māyāvi has been changed here to become Māyāvanta. There are slight differences here and there in the style of composition. Vālmīki has said, Sugrīva waited for Vālī at the entrance of Māyāvi's cave for 12 months. Mādhava Kaṇḍalī says: 15 months. The difference in the anecdote of piercing 'Sapta-tāla' is found here in the fact of Vālī's ability to pierce three tāla trees, while Rāma demonstrated his power by piercing all the seven at a time.

After first day's duel between Vālī and Sugrīva, Rāma gave an explanation to vauqnished, enraged and wounded Sugrīva as to why it was not possible to kill Vālī and then, as soon as he touched Sugrīva, his body became completely free from pain and even got stronger.

According to Vālmīki, Sugrīva did not go to fight again on that very day, but he challenged Vālī for a second fight after three or four days. Tārā prohibited Vālī from another combat. She had dreamt a bad dream which was indicative of a premonition about an impending disaster-"dāhinor chakṣu mor saghane saghane ghure." The returning of defeated Sugrīva and his alliance with Rāmacandra was a portent of this danger. Vālī should call back Sugrīva and give him the honourable place of a prince in the kingdom.

Vālī, however, argued that Rāma was a man of virtue, he could not afford to commit any wrong. Tārā again tried to persuade Vālī, saying: Rāma was extremely compassionate to his devotees, he would not hesitate to commit wrong in the interest of his devotee.

Rāma of Vālmīki is wedded to truth, is dedicated to friend. Rāma of Mādhava Kaṇḍalī, on the other hand, is fully compassionate to his devotee. Here, one must note some special characteristics. According to the purāṇas, Vālī was the son of Indra and Sugrīva was the son of Sūrya. Both the gods with

their respective followers were partisans in the Vālī-Sugrīva duel, though they did not actually participate in the fight. One should note further that this kind of story is not found in the other Rāmāyaṇas under review.

Vālī came out to fight and immediately thereafter ominous indications became evident—crows and vultures were seen flying overhead. "bāṃ pāśe sarpa jāy dāhiṇe śṛigāla." Then as the right moment arrived, Rāma pierced the chest of Vālī on the assumption, that there would not be any wrong if the enemy of the devotee was killed. Now, Vālī starts accusing Rāma and this accusation is on the whole in accordance with the original. Rāma's reply also follows the original. With other arguments there is also one : the promise must be adhered to. Rāma says : "tor gati bhaila Vālī mor hāte paḍi, Svarge calı yāha divya vimānata caḍi"(3638),—"oh Vālī ! you have had the best possible termination of your life here on account of my intervention. You can now go to heaven in a divine plane."

There is no word here about virtue or ethics. But as soon as Rāma says so, Vālī is found to be immediately possessed by divine wisdom. The realisation that Rāmacandra himself is God-incarnate dawns on him Vālī praises him.

In Tārā's laments there is a new element—her cursing of Rāma. Even when Sītā is rescued and taken to Ayodhyā, Rāma will have to forsake her.

Let us now have a look at Kṛittivāsa. He composed the Rāmāyaṇa in Bengali in circa 15th century A. D. The part under review has been narrated by him in 542 verses (payāra).

Kṛittivāsa refers to "alliance" :

"Paraspar vāiri māri uddhāriva nārı
agni-sākṣī ei satyā hoila dohāri."

"Having killed enemy of the one by the other with mutual co-operation, we will rescue our wives—this was the promise given by one to the other solemnised by swearing-in before fire as witness."

Kṛittivāsa, however, has added a new element here : Sugrīva himself proposed that Rāma should help to patch up the breach between the two brothers who would later join together to

posing the Ādi Kāṇḍa. In the current edition one can notice Śaṁkaradeva's self-introducing couplets.

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their respective followers were partisans in the Vālī-Sugrīva duel, though they did not actually participate in the fight. One should note further that this kind of story is not found in the other Rāmāyaṇas under review.

Vālī came out to fight and immediately thereafter ominous indications became evident—crows and vultures were seen flying overhead. "bāṃ pāśe sarpa jāy dāhiṇe śṛigāla." Then as the right moment arrived, Rāma pierced the chest of Vālī on the assumption, that there would not be any wrong if the enemy of the devotee was killed. Now, Vālī starts accusing Rāma and this accusation is on the whole in accordance with the original. Rāma's reply also follows the original. With other arguments there is also one : the promise must be adhered to. Rāma says : "tor gati bhaila Vālī mor hāte paḍi, Svarge calı yāha divya vimānata caḍi"(3638),—"oh Vālī ! you have had the best possible termination of your life here on account of my intervention. You can now go to heaven in a divine plane."

There is no word here about virtue or ethics. But as soon as Rāma says so, Vālī is found to be immediately possessed by divine wisdom. The realisation that Rāmacandra himself is God-incarnate dawns on him Vālī praises him.

In Tārā's laments there is a new element—her cursing of Rāma. Even when Sītā is rescued and taken to Ayodhyā, Rāma will have to forsake her.

Let us now have a look at Kṛittivāsa. He composed the Rāmāyaṇa in Bengali in circa 15th century A. D. The part under review has been narrated by him in 542 verses (payāra).

Kṛittivāsa refers to "alliance" :

"Paraspar vāiri māri uddhāriva nārī
agni-sākṣī ei satyā hoila dohāri."

"Having killed enemy of the one by the other with mutual co-operation, we will rescue our wives—this was the promise given by one to the other solemnised by swearing-in before fire as witness."

Kṛittivāsa, however, has added a new element here : Sugrīva himself proposed that Rāma should help to patch up the breach between the two brothers who would later join together to

rescue Sītā. Rāma, however, disagreed on this suggestion, because :

Koriyāchi protijñā je agni-sākṣī kori
Vālī bodhi tomāre koriva adhikārī.
Āmār vacan kobhu nā hoy khaṇḍana
Pitṛi-vākya krame kena āilām vana.

—"I have sworn before the fire as witness that, I would give you the possession (of this kingdom) after killing Vālī. My words can never be untrue. If it be so, then why did I come to dwell in the forest to keep my father's vow.

About the seven tāla trees, Sugrīva says :
"Sāta tāla gācha jadi vindha eka śare
tabe sey Vālīke tumi jinibe samare."

—"If you can pierce seven tāla trees by throwing one arrow, only then you can defeat Vālī in the combat."

We have already referred to the subject of the prophecy about Vālī's death as being connected with the piercing of seven tāla trees as noted in Nṛisiṁha purāṇa and others. In Sugrīva's statement here that prophecy in the form of a curse is, of course, not fully evident, but there can be no denying that these words of Sugrīva have a tone which is indicative of that curse. (At least, it can be reasonably inferred that Kṛittivāsa was aware of the popular myth created in the referred purāṇas).

In this connection it is to be noted that Kṛittivāsa's story-structure is in overall accord with that of Vālmīki. Barring the events of bad dream and other omens, it is also in agreement with Mādhava Kandalī's. But it can be inferred that Kṛittivāsa was psychologically averse to the act of Vālī's murder. After narrating the event of Vālī's murder Kṛittivāsa has remarked :

Kṛittivāsa paṇḍiter thākila viṣāda
dhārmik Rāmer kena hoilā pramāda.

—"Kṛittivāsa paṇḍit finds himself in a state of perplexing sadness, for he does not know why did virtuous Rāma become a victim of a great blunder".

That is, Vālī's murder, according to Kṛittivāsa, was the result of Rāma's religious blunder. Let us remember what Mādhava Kandalī has written here after Vālī had been pierced by a dart :

Sādhiloho Sugrīva-mitrar jata kāj
ehi buli Rāghava vānara bhoilā vāj. (3609)

—"I have done everything what should have been done for my ally Sugrīva—saying this, Rāghava appeared as the thunder.

While Vālmīki has composed Vālī's accusations in 38 verses, Mādhava Kandalī has done it in 41 and Kṛittivāsa in 35. Not only that Rāma has committed a blunder by killing Vālī, Vālī's invectives also were not liked by Kṛittivāsa : "Kṛittivāsa bale kena Rāme deha gāli"—"Kṛittivāsa asks, 'why are you abusing Rāma' ' '

Kṛittivāsa's Rāma also had briefly replied in almost same vein as Vālmīki's Rāma did. The former, however, did not refer to 'dharma' i.e. Divine law, but mentioned punishment for enjoyment of another's wife and also passionate affection for a devotee just in the manner Mādhava Kandalī's Rāma had done—

Bhakta hena Sugrīvere kariva pālan
tāhār je Śatru tār vadhiva jīban.

—"I shall protect a devotee like Sugrīva and certainly kill his enemy".

The most astonishingly novel, however, is the tenderness and modesty of Kṛittivāsa's Rāma. Vālī was the elder brother of Rāma's friend Sugrīva and was, therefore, a person of reverence and respect with whom Rāma cannot fight. Hence, Rāma begged pardon from Vālī :

tomār sahit juddha mor nāhi sāje
kṣamā karo kopi-rāj kena pāḍa lāje.
kṣamā kara vīr taba daiber likhana
āmār prāsāde jāo Mahendra bhavan.

—"To fight with you is improper for me. Oh, the king of semi-man vānaras ! please pardon me, please do not make me bashful. Oh, the great warrior ! please excuse me, it is your destiny that hath brought this upon you ; by my grace now, you just proceed towards the palace of Mahendra (king of the gods)".

This demonstration of modesty by Rāma is followed by similar modesty of Vālī who also begs pardon for his unusual

invectives and prays for protection of prince Añgada. Then come the laments of Tārā, which part is comparatively long. Kṛittivāsa's Tārā too cursed Rāma as did Mādhava Kandalī's :

Sitā uddhārive Rāma āpana vikrame
Sītāre ānive ghare bahu pariśrame
Kintu Sītā nā rohive sadā taba pāśa
Kichudin thākiā karive svarga-bāsa.

—"Oh, Rāma ; you will rescue Sitā by using your own powers and valour and you will bring her home after hard efforts. But Sitā will not remain with you all the time ; after having stayed with you for some time, she will go to the heaven to live".

* * * *

Vinā doṣe mārile jeman kapīśvare
mārive tomāre Rāma sei janmāntare.

"As you have killed the lord of vānaras, without any guilt, you will be killed in the same manner by your next incarnation".

This last verse describing the curse is not to be found in Mādhava Kandali's Rāmāyaṇa nor in any other place. It is a novel innovation.

One can easily notice, that both Mādhava Kandali's and Kṛittivāsa's narrations of the murder of Vāli are tinctured, out of context, with the presentation of Rāma's nobility and greatness.While narrating the first duel between Vālī and Sugrīva, Mādhava Kandali describes Rāma's greatness in the ten verses beginning with—

śuna sāmājika jan a Rāmera carita
Kālimala vināśana parama amṛit a etc, and ending with
Rāma-kathā śunā houk janmera sapaala
bala Rāma Rāma mahā miluka maṅgala."

"Hear, O men of the society ! the character of Rāma which is the supreme nectar that would certainly remove and destroy all the dirts (unholy things) ; and : by listening Rāma-story you can make your life succesful in worldly life. Please go to chanting the name of "Rāma" and aehieve the goodners."

Kṛittivāsa, on the other hand, has described Rāma's greatness in between the narration of Rāma's outburst of grief after having observed the ornaments thrown away by Sītā towards the vānaras and consequent oath taken by Sugrīva to rescue Sītā. Here the number of verses is eleven.

This sudden and accidental similarity between the two poets—Kṛittivāsa and Mādhava Kandalī—might seem astonishing at first look, but it is not without significance. We have referred to its contextuality earlier. It is quite fit when judged from the view point of the inlay of the subject-matter. But, if one dives into the respective psychologies of the two poets and judges their presentations from that view-point, he will find that Kṛittivāsa was extremely sensitive to Rāma's wrong act of murder of Vālī, and though Kandalī has described it as an action in the interest of an ally, he, nevertheless, is evidently shaky in supporting it. Perhaps, it is due to this shakiness in his heart, Mādhava Kandalī has been forced to accept the act as something divinely mystic and an act of providence. It is this psychology which has forced him to feel the necessity of presenting the greatness of Rāma.

Let us now turn towards Sant Tulasīdāsa who composed his "Rāma Carita Mānasa" in circa 16th century A.D. His story of Vālī in the Kiṣkindhyā kāṇḍa is rathar brief. Leaving aside introductory dedication in Sanskrit, his story consists of 69 verses including 'chowpāi', 'dohā' etc. Despite brevity, the story follows the order of Vālmīki's original. In the matter of factuality there is a little difference. Vālī asked Sugrīva to wait for 15 days. But Sugrīva waited for a whole month.

Sugrīva got Rāma's companionship which made his heart free from desire and attachment. This is completely a nobel element ; Sugrīva said to Rāma :

Sukha sampatti paribār baḍāi
Sab parihari kari hou sevakāi.

—"Leaving aside all vanities connected with happiness, property and family, I desire to be your servant."

As this kind of feeling overtook his heart and brain, Sugrīva began to think that Vālī also was a great beneficent, for it was

due to Vālī that he had been bestowed with the opportunity of meeting Rāma :

Vālı parama hita janu prasādā
milehu Rāma tumha śamana vishādā.

—"Vālī is a great beneficent who has brought the Divine Grace. It is due to him that I have been able to meet you, oh Rāma, the destroyer of all distress."

There is a special characteristic in Vālī's first impression about Rāma. When Tārā cautioned Vālī by striving to present a fearful impression of Rāma, he replied : "Rāma has equal feeling about both friend and foe : and if Rāma choses to kill Vālı, then Vālī would surely get him—"Jou kadāci mohi mārhi tou puni hou sanātha."

However, let us now go into Tulasīdāsa's facts. Rāma by his touch had made the body of Sugrīva hard like a bolt after the latter was wounded during the first fight with Vālī. And during the second fight when Vālī was lying pierced by Rāma's dart, he could immediately recognise Rāma as the god-incarnate, but suppressed his intense love for God and instead, started throwing hard abusive words. Rāma, in reply, presented two principal guilts of Vālī—one, lasciviousness for younger brother's wife ; and two, despite knowledge of Rāma's protection of Sugrīva, Vālī had ventured to fight against him. Now, Vālī disclosed his clever contrivance and then said : "I am a sinner, I am taking refuge to thee when I am at my life's end"—"Probhu ājui moi pātaki antakāla gati tori." Then, Rāma, the incarnate of compassion and love for his devotee, touched the head of Vālı and wanted to give him immortal life. But Vālī did not agree to accept this boon, simply because : "innumerable Munis (sages) are found to be unable to utter the name "Rāma", even though they have been trying it life after life, and it is his name which makes Śiva to free Jīva in Kāśī. That very Rāma is personally present before him. Why Vālī should forsake this unprecedented opportunity ? Will such an unexpected event ever happen again ?"

Janama Janama muni jatana karahi
anta Rāma kahi ābata nāhi.

Jāsu nāme bala śaṁkara Kāśī
deta sab-hi samagati avināśī
Mama locana gocara seiābhā
bahuri ki probhu asa banihi banābā.

Therefore, Vālī refused to live in his physical body and instead, prayed to Rāma : "If due to karma—the result that follows according to the law of retribution, he has to be born again on this physical plane, then, whatever 'yonī' (creature) that might be for him, he must have intense love for and devotion to Rāma."

—aba nātha kari karunā vilokohu
dehu jo vara maga-u
jehi yonī janama-u karama-vāsa
taha Rāma-pada anurāga-u.

This seems to echo and resemblance Vidyāpati's prayer-verses :

Ki-e mānuṣa paśu pākhī ki-e janamiye
athavā kiṭa-pataṁga
Karama vipāke gatāgati puna puna
mati rahu tuā parasaṁge.

—"Due to fated result of the Law of retribution I might be born as a man or a beast or a bird or any of the insects and worms and this coming and going might happen again and again, but, oh Lord, in all these states of existence let my mind and heart be with thee".

After having said this, Tulasīdāsa's Vālī left his physical body. The Lord came to the bereaved and intensely lamenting Tārā and made her quiet after giving her true wisdom. Now, Rāmacandra is placed in perfectly divine glory. His divinity and love for devotee is full to the brim in all the sixteen kalās (parts). He is now like the touch-stone which immediately turns iron into gold.

Bhakta Tulasīdāsa has successfully churned the hearts of the devotee and has produced the nectar of love for the Supreme out of what Vālmīki gave to the world.

Now, let us turn to Nepalese poet Bhānubhakta (1812-1868), who flourished in the last century. His Nepalese version of the Rāmāyaṇa might be more recent than other Aryan and

Indo-Aryan languages, but as creative literature it has occupied equal and enviable position with all the classics.

The story of Vālī in Bhānubhakta's kiṣkindhyā kāṇḍa has been compiled in 300 lines. In Nepalese translation some influence of Rāma-Carita Mānasa is evident, but he has principally followed Vālmīki. Sugrīva-Rāma alliance through the medium of Hanumāna, the murder Vālī, test of Rāma's strength and powers by piercing seven tāla trees—all these are inaccurate confarmity with the original. When Rāma's arrow came back to him after piercing all the seven tāla trees, Sugrīva came to consider Rāma as God-incarnate and bowed down to him offering his wife, son and all wealth and property for Rāma's service.

Bhānubhakta's Sugrīva says :

hāy nātha ! balla chinhya aho sakalkā ātmā jagannāth a bhani
māyā dekhi fārāk bhayo aba ta man lagdaina māyā pāni
kyā gorchu aba putra-dara-dhanle sampurṇa thi dur houn
merā sab daśa indriyāi hazurkā sevā tahalmā rahun.

In reply to Tārā's caution, Bhānubhakta's Vālī also recognised Rāma as the Supreme Being-incarnate—"Ragunātha sakṣat Ramākā pati." After having been wounded by Rāma's dart, Vālī uttered some complaints and allegations, but these were more condensed than what are found in Vālmīki, Mādhava Kandalī and Kṛittivāsa. Yet, this part of Bhānubhakta is in more detail than Tulasīdāsa's and is in conformity with the original. Rāma's reply consists of six lines and it included the sin of Vālī for forcefully enjoying Sugrīva's wife Rumā. At the same time, Rāma's reply resembled what has been said in the Gītā in connection with the establishment and restoration of virtue in the world.

As soon as Rāma said so, Bhānubhakta's Vālī also immediately bowed down like Tulasīdāsa's Vālī and said : "The person whose name brings salvation from this whirlpool of birth and death as soon as one brings it to his memory, that very person is standing before my eyes. Shall an auspicious moment like this ever come in my life again ?"

Following this resignation, laments of Bhānubhakta's Tārā follow the pattern set up by Vālmīki. Hanumāna's words consoling Tārā also follow the original. Vālmīki's Rāma gave consolation and wisdom of truth of reality, in eleven verses. Bhānubhakta's Rāma too did the same in seventeen verses. In conclusion he said : "If you have understood my real being and also the actual meaning of my words, then you will certainly be easily freed from all the bonds produced by karma."

As we have seen above, Vālmīki's Rāma is the greatest among men and Rāma of both Kandalī and Kṛttivāsa is God-incarnate whose person, as a man is not beyond perception. But Tulasīdāsa's Rāma is the Supreme God in human form. In Bhānubhakta's view also Rāma's divinity is fully evident. This history of the evolution of Rāma in the Rāmāyaṇa from the state of a man to the state of God head is organically associated with the history of Rāma-worshippers of the Rāmāt or Rāmāyeta-sect which came into existence and evolved in South India. Although almost from the begining of the Christian era Rāma began to be identified with the same divinity as Viṣṇu is ; he was not fully established as so before the eleventh century A.D. On the other hand, Kṛṣṇa-based Vaiṣṇava-sect had always been in eminence. In far distant past the Ālwār-sect was credited with the cult of devotion to Rāma. In this connection one must remember that the Kamba Rāmāyaṇa in Tamil circa twelvth century A.D. was the first among all the regional language-versions.

In the beginning, the question whether Vālī was killed by Rāma behind the scene or in a straight, face to face combat, has been discussed. Even if there is two trends of opinion regarding the actuality of the event, Vālmīki has probably accepted that Rāma killed Vālī behind the scene. Why did he do so ? Did he want to give a touch of reality to the character he created ? Did he do it to draw a distinguishing contrast ? Or, did he do it to say that the action was not a misdeed if judged from the view point of contemporary ideals ? Vālmīki has opined that Vālī's accusations were in accord with Dharma.

And again when Rāma justified his own action, that justification also was in full accord with Dharma according to Vālmīki. Vālī who knows Dharma accepts Rāma's interpretation. He realises his own mistakes and begs pardon for his misconduct. Now, what does this "Dharma" actually stand for? Probably, this "Dharma" is not connected with any kind of philosophical self-enquiry. It is perhaps something which percolated through traditional public-conduct i.e. sadācāra, current in the-then society. It might be like the precedents established by courts of law. Current intellectual standard and traditional code of conduct that has descended from older times might have joined together to form this "Dharma." Rāma had said: "Vidūṣayasi māṃ dharma pitṛ-paitāmahe sthitaṃ" (4. 19. 44)—he is guided by the "Dharma" of his fore-fathers i.e. by the code of conduct established by his fore-fathers. The hard-to-know "Dharma" can be interpreted correctly and accurately only when there is an operative synthesis between the traditional and the current practice. The underlying principle of it is too difficult to grasp. To come to a judgment on this, one has to encounter innumerable controversies that move to different directions, even to opposite directions. The principle of "Dharma" is really hidden and it is why Yudhiṣṭhira said: "Mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ"—"the correct path is what has been trodden by great and noble persons." This is what is called tradition. It is this stony way of tradition that a conservative society must tread. Man's intelligence that can both reason and feel simultaneously, is not an inert substance. Only when awareness and intellect come together to act, there appear the mere truths and principles.

Right at this moment while on the one side a world-wide debate is going on whether criminal code should include death-sentence, on the other side a very ancient semitic law is being used to kill convicts by stone-throwing or by any other like-means. It appears that a similar controversy was there in Vālmīki's times. That is why Rāma has been assailed even though his action was in full accord with the Law (Dharma). And, to wipe out that disgrace, Rāma-story writers of the

following ages have interpreted the act of murdering Vālī in different ways. Interpretations have varied in accordance with time and place, Mādhava Kandalī did not find any fault of Rāma ; Kṛttivāsa has seen it as a blunder ; and in the works of Tulasīdāsa and Bhānubhakta, Rāmacandra being the Supreme God in person, Vālī's death in Rāma's hand was something indicative of his supreme luck ; it was actually an act of great divine grace to the devotee in the outward form of physical punishment.

In course of this evolution there might appear new information about Rāma's character, but the common reader will always give more stress on the principle involved.

It is, of course, true that there appears a change in the "Dharma" (i.e. in the understanding of the divine law) due to various practical needs, and it is also true that we always try to compromise with the current needs by justifying acts or conducts on the basis of precedents that we extract from history, old stories, tradition, literature etc. But "Dharma" or the nature's code of living a life has an eternal, perennial flow which has been described by Rabindranath as *Mānava Dharma.* One cannot, by sweet individual will, whisk himself out of that perennial flow of life. Even if one does so the inherent human nature will never bear that out. Man lives his fragmented life both individually and socially move on the path of least resistance and that fits with the unfragmented, timeless, eternal "Dharma" or life-principle. The voice, the tune that we listen to in the Rāmāyaṇa and in the character of Rāma, nay, in all ancient classics, guides us in our movement in life—at least, we interpret our life in that way, we want to understand life in that fashion. As we move onward, we drench the eternal, the timeless in the liquid of the contemporary to fit it with our mind's requirement. The evolution, evident in the changing perspective that features the character of Rāma, brings home the man who represented his age, particularly when the contemporary ethical standard is put into consideration. It is, as if, both micro and macro scope in one and the same time.

The Rama Legend in the Pre-Muslim Bengal

Suresh Chandra Moitra

The historical period of Bengal generally begins with the expansion of Gupta rule over it. And since then "new forms of Brāhmiṇism had taken deep roots in the minds of the people."

According to Dr. P. C. Bagchi—"the Vedic gods had mostly disappeared and their places taken by new divinities whom we call 'Purāṇic.' Even in the early Gupta inscriptions we meet with gods who, although Vedic in name, have no real connection with the Vedic rituals. They belong to the mythology of the epics and Purāṇas. Temples were erected for such gods. The dwarf (Vāmana) incarnation is invoked to show how Viṣṇu subdued Vālī, the Lord of Daityas, who had ousted Indra from the heavens. The incarnations of Kṛṣṇa, Narasiṃha and Paraśurāma are also known and amorous dalliances of Kṛṣṇa with one hundred gopies are also not forgotten."[1]

1

The Rāma legend found some form of recognition even in the very beginning of the Gupta expansion, though not in any sculptural and terracotta pannel. That this legend had become very popular was evident in two ways. "The Gupta sovereigns of Magadha describe themselves *Parama Bhagavatas* and were unquestionably great champions of the religion of the Vāsudeva. With the rise of their power Bhāgavatism which was synonymous with vaiṣṇavism naturally came to the forefront and spread to the remote corners of India."[2] Thus in the Gupta age Vāsudeva's indentification with Viṣṇu became an accomplished fact. So Viṣṇu's other avataras could hardly be

kept in the oblivion. Two proper names and one place-name found in inscriptions bear the semblance of the Rāma legend.

Surely, the peculiarities of Bengali surnames asserted themselves from the Dāmodarpur copper plate of Kumāra Gupta. Here we for the first time come across the names and surnames intimately related. In the copper plates we find many people bear names taken from the Rāmāyaṇa. And this cannot happen all on a sudden, unless the legend had already gained some curency in the region. In the Dhanāidaha copper plate we find an officer whose name was Rāma. This copper plate was issued during the rule of Kumāra Gupta ; the date of issue is 432 433 A.D.[3] Whereas in the Pāhāḍpur copper plate of the same era a record-keeper (Pustapāla) was named as Rāmadāsa, as also the name of the wife of certain Brāhmiṇ was Rāmī. In the Dāmodarpur copper plate we find the name Ayodhyā mentioned as a place name. So Rāma-Kathā had exerted an unmistakable influence upon the society.

II

With the inception of the Pāla rule the Rāma-legend entered into a different phase. In inscriptions, sculptures and literary writings there was an abundance of Rāma Kathā. We have to contradict Professor Sukumar Sen's statement ; he says that in the eighth and ninth centuries the Rāmāyaṇa was not popular in the learned society ; in the pictures of Pāhāḍpur, the Rāmāyaṇa has no contribution.[4]

In five of the seventeen inscriptions of the Pāla period we come across the Rāma legend. At first, the legend was used for similes ; and that was done with an aim of enhancing the power and prestige of the ruling monarch.

In the Khalimpur copper plate inscription of Dharma Pāla Deva, we find that this most exalted monarch employed all the valours as shown by the ruler of the earth as Pṛthu, Rāma, scion of the race or Raghus, Nala and the like.[5]

Deeper went the legend straight from the days of Deva Pāla Deva. In his Moonghyr copper plate he was compared with

Rāma alone, not with any other, however great. This solitary reference had a particular significance to the Setubandha an important incident of Rāma-Kathā.

During the reign of the Nārāyaṇa Pāla Deva the Garuḍa pillar was errected by his minister, Gurava Misra. This monument is of great importance. Though himself not a king, only a counsel he errected this pillar narrating his family exploits. He made himself described as the pure-souled one ; so occurred the rebirth of Vālmīki in the Iron Age.

The study of Rāma Kathā in the Bhagalpur copper plate of Nārāyaṇa Pāla Deva reveals another important aspect. This copper plate is very loud about the virtues of the king's younger brother Vāka Pāla. The prince was endowed with noble virtues and they are to be compared with those of Lakṣmaṇa. This was the first reference made to Lakṣmaṇa not as a hero, but as a devoted brother. Some degree of political relevance may be attached to it.

The Kamauli copper plate of Vaidya Deva is simply a draft of Rāma Caritam of Sandhyākara Nandi (an epic in metaphor). Here too Rāmāpala Deva too had been compared with Rāma candra, has fatherland (Janak bhavana) with Sītā. He too slain Bhīma, but Bhīma was none but Rāvana, he used the Gangas as in Satubandha had been accomplished.

However, the rūpaka (metaphor) embracing Rāma, Sītā and Rāvaṇa relating to the restoration of Pāla dynasty by Rāma Pāla was very popular among the citizens of Varendra. Two poets might have taken the clue from the same source without following other and have shaped the story in their own fashion or necessity. And emergence of Rāvaṇa as an important character also shows a new stance in the feudal relations of the period.

Another reference to the Rāmāyaṇa is found in an inscription of Śrīcandra of the Candra dynasty of Harikela. Trailokyacandra was equally renowned for his victories ; as such the poet is very much influenced by Kālidāsa of Raghuvanśam. Trailokyacandra was compared with Dilīpa gandly-virtues were only emphasised,

In the Pāla period there were literary and sculptural evidences are illustrate the stories of the Rāmāyaṇa. The first literary work of some distinction was from the pen of Abhinanda.

Bengal must have been the place of our author's residence or birth. One of the reasons for considering him as a Bengalee that his verses are quoted extensively by the authors who flourished in Bengal. Further, he praises the goddess of Devi or Śakti on the lines of Tāntrikas of Bengal in the sixteenth chapter of the Rāma Caritam, which also confirms that the author was a Bengalee because Bengal was in the medieval times the home of Tantricism, both Buddhist and Hindu.[7]

The Raṣṭrakuṭa princes were very fond of adopting names ending in 'Vāsa' and it is very probable that the king Deva-Pāla during his stāy in his maternal uncle's household was known by the name of Haravarṣa, while his elder brother Tribhuvana Pāla was Yuvarāja crown-Prince) in the court of his father Dharmapāla. Abhinanda was the son of Satānanda who was a poet of no less importance. Many of his poems are found in Subhāṣitatna Koṣa and other compilations. Abhinanda did not cover the whole story of the Rāmāyaṇa ; he started from the Kiṣkindhyā Kāṇḍa and ended the story in the Laṅkā Kāṇḍa. The Kāvya is of 40 kāṇḍas, of which thirtysix kāṇḍas were written by Abhinanda and the remaining four by one Bhīma The Kāvya was written in an epic style ; he depicted war episodes, but did not over emphasize them. The killing of Kumbhakarṇa was just an affair, so the murder of an opponent in the battle caused no extra jubilation in the victor. ious camp. This was somewhat epic like dispassionate narration of the episodes. In the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa Rāmacandra was advised by the sage Agaṣtya to worship Sūrya, the Sun-god as a preparation for killing Rāvaṇa. But the worshipping of a he-god was not preferred by the latter Purāṇa writers or poets.[8]

In the Bengali recension of the Rāmāyaṇa by Kṛttivasa Rāmacandra made an untimely worship of the goddess Candī prior to his killing of Rāvaṇa. In the Rāma Caritam of Abhi-

nanda we find a missing link between the worship of a she-god by a god himself and the worship of a she-god by a non-human being. Here we find Hanumāna worshipping of Aryā Devī before he was about to cross the turbulent sea. This Aryā was synonimous with the goddess Candī (Vide Śloka no 61). The worshipping of a she-god adds a new thing to our history of religion.

The Rāma-Kathā is to be found in the Rāma Caritam by Sandhyākara Nandi. The author of this Kāvya has given a short account of his ownself in the concluding portion of the text. He was an inhabitant of the village called Bṛhavatu situated close to the city of Puṇḍravardhana and belonged to the illustrious family of Nandis.[9]

He was quite unambiguous in announcing the object of his composing the poem His Rāmāyaṇa is of the Kaliyuga and here (on earth) the poet too is Vālmīki of the Kaliyuga. Equally he was frank about the devices he employed in composing the Kāvya.

The Rāma Caritam is primarily a historical poem, and secondarily a Paurāṇic tale. The land Varendra is Sītā and the king Rāma Pāla is Rāmacandra, his antagonist Bhīma is Rāvaṇa ; the uncle Bibhīṣaṇa is Hari, who forsook his master in a very critical moment, not for observing any dharma but for a handful of silver. There is also a setuvandha when Rāma Pāla along with his army crossed Gangā with a flotilla of boats. Bibhīṣaṇa here was also amply rewarded. He could not marry the widow of Bhīma as all the relatives were murdered by the Yuvarāja.

It is already hinted that the poet Sandhyākara Nandi was not always original in his conception. He was original when he was more cruel to his adversary, sparing none of his relatives to survive. The poet wrote the Kāvya in an epic style, but ended it in the fourth chapter ; so it became nothing but a Khaṇḍa Kāvya. An exceptionally ambitious theme could not make the Kāvya a Mahākāvya. So the temper and treatment of the poem are in discordance. The enemy was not killed in a straight battle, and he was murdered after being made a captive. No Sanskritic alamkāra Śāstra

sanctions such an act as a virtuous one. A drama written by one Murāri is based on Rāma Kathā : but the identity of the author as a son of Bengal is doubtful.

Happily a great koṣa grantha has recently been discovered and published under the joint editorship of Professor D. D. Kosambi and Professor V. V. Gokhale in 1957. The name of the book is Subhāṣitaratna Koṣa (a part of which was edited by F. W. Thomas as Kavindravacanasamuccaya under the Bibliotheca Indica in 1911.).[10] In this Koṣa we find two short poems where Rāmacandra has been referred to. The fist one was composed by Satānanda, father of Abhinanda. The second verse was composed by one Subhaṅga. His identity is yet to be known. This verse was re-quoted by Srīdhara Dāsa in Saduktikarṇāmṛta.

Once lived a mighty monarch of the earth,
Rāma, scion of the house of Raghu.
At this child of Devakī did smile
And may his smile protect you ! (verse 123-Śatānanda).

Oh Lakṣmaṇa, these clouds distress me who
have lost my Sītā.
The cruel kadamba-scented breeze cut me to the quick.
(verse 131-Śubhaṅga)

These two verses disclose one important point, the Rāma legend was still a finer new story ; an incarnation of Viṣṇu he is senior to Kṛṣṇa. In the Subhāṣitarātna Koṣa, episodes from Rāma-Kathā have been mentioned as many as twenty three times. So it can safely be concluded that the legend had become very popular. It reveals the cultural heritage of the age.

In the Haricaritam of Caturbhuja Rāmacandra was depicted as an avatāra. Haricaritam was written at Kāraṇja, a village near Rāmakelī in the suburb of Gouḍa. It was composed in the last phase of the Pāla rule.[11]

The great Pāhāḍpur monastery is the biggest of its kind in the North-East India There is an abundance of terracottas which made Dr. Stella Kramrisch, a great interpreter of Indian Art to remark, "an acute sense of frolicsome freedom of vigorous action reveals the Indian artist from yet another side."[12] In the brilliant monastery there are as six terracottas that can safely be attributed to different episodes of the Rāmāyana.[18]

1. Setubandha.
2. Rāma as an ascetic in the forest.
3. Carrying of Gandhamādana by Hanumāna.
4. Rāma-Lakṣmaṇa as ascetics but with bows and packs of arrows on their back.
5. Vālī and Sugrīva fighting.
6. Sugrīva with a garland on his neck.

We need not waste our space in narrating stylistic excellence of the art-treasure of Pāhāḍpur.

Mr Diksit wrote in his report, "A large number of the latter class pertains to the Kṛṣṇa cult which apparently loses its force in the Pāla period when the worship of Viṣṇu was at its highest in Bengal. Such a large number of figures relating to the Kṛṣṇa legend, though without any general sequence would indicate that a great centre of Krsṇa cult and worship – the earliest known in Eastern India was located of Pāhāḍpur.

But with due humility we may say that Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu did not monopolise the attention of the artist; other avatāras had received some attention.

Pāhāḍpur was avowedly a Buddhist monastery; a vast number of Brāhmanical deities were installed on the walls of the temple. Mr. Diksit felt an amazement at this. But it was not a unique feature found exclusively at Pāhdāpur. In the inscriptions of the Pāla era we had already evidences of unorthodox and tolerant attitude of the kings. When a rule, both political and religious, is firmly established, the fear of contamination by a rival faith fades away. Such was also the case in Orissa. When Bhaumakara dynasty ruled the land,

icons of the Brāhmanical deities were made in a good number though the kings were devoted Buddhists.

Monkeys play a prominent role in many popular themes at Pāhāḍpur. They were always popular in Indian art from the time of Bharuta Stupa but nowhere they attained a god-head : Hanumāna who enjoyed so much prominence in literature and sculpture was nothing more than a valiant warrior.

In the Vikramśilā vihāra near Bhagalpur no episode either from the Rāmāyaṇa or from the Mahābhārata was depicted in any terracotta But there was Hanumāna ; but he was just a monkey. In the Maināmati monastery no epic hero had found any place, but there were monkeys without any iota of veneration.

The solitary specimen of stone images of the Rāmāyaṇa was found in Rājśāhi. Some of our learned scholars have arrived at the conclusion that no icon of Rāmacandra was ever produced by the Bengal school ; before the thirteenth century there is no evidence of Rāma worship ; his exploits were gloriously narrated in poetry, no icon of Rāmacandra made either by stone or metal has been discovered.[14]

An image of Rāma Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā on a low plinth supported by Hanumāna was found at Gaṇeśapur in Rājśāhī in 1934. This is perhaps the only image of Rāma found in Bengal. According to N.B. Sanyal, curator of the Varendra Research Museum at Rājśāhī the image belonged to the late Pāla period. The sculpture is of poor workmanship and belongs to the decadent period of Pāla art.[15]

The Rāma legend was used in lintels and wall decorations. Two instances of such decorations are at our disposal. A stone lintel obtained from Sitlai (Rājśāhī) exhibiting Hanumāna carrying Gandhamādana is in the posession of V.R S. Museum, Rājśāhī. The fine stone work of the lintel resembles the works done by the Rāṣṭrakūtas in Elorā.

A plaque depicting an episode of the life of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa has been dug out from a pond at Kārtikpur, 24

Parganas. This plaque is also of stone, and an exhibit of the Ashutos Museum of the Calcutta University.[16]

In the Pāla age all the sculptural and archaeological specimens meet in a particular area of the legend from Kiṣkindhyā Kāṇḍa to Yuddha Kāṇḍa. Are they so dictated by the thematic considerations of Abhinanda ?

III

The Senas were unlike the Pālas in many respects, they were devoted Hindus. They were not sons of the soil. They came from the south with some zeal for Brāhmaṇical and Purāṇic religion, which they never forsook.

The Deopāra inscription of Vijaysena was composed by Umāpatidhara, the celebrated court-poet. Like the famous Gaṅgā icon of Deopāra this inscription on a stone slab is highly ornamental. The poet says that it might be possible only by Vālmīki or Vyāsa to depict the achievements of the thing Vijaysena in detail. The king is praised for his military exploits.[17] Nearly eight copper plates have been discovered so far. In only one copper plate Rāma-Kathā has been honoured. But there are some proper names, such as Rāma Devi, mother of Lakṣmaṇa Sena, a lake named Rāvaṇa And the victory camp or capital was named as Lakṣmaṇa vatī. All these informations we get from the Madhāinagar copper plate of Lakṣmaṇa Sena.[18] Rāma Deva, a priest is mentioned in the Sundarban copper plate of the same king. There was one village named Rāmasiddhi in the Sāhitya Parisad copper plate of Viṣvarūpa Sena. The name of the same village also occurred in the Edilpur copper plate of Viṣvarūpa Sena.

The court-poets of Lakṣmaṇa Sena wrote two Kāvyas, one is Gīta-Govindam, another is Pavanadūtam. The first is by Jayadeva and second by Dhoyī. In both these Kāvyas, there are references to Rāma, but he is not the hero of any of the poem. In the Gīta-Govindam Rāma is included in the Daśā-

batāra hymn.[19] In the Pavanadūtam, the hero is the king himself, but there are six ślokas bearing direct references to the Rāmāyaṇa. In śloka 10 setubandha is referred to and in śloka 30 a salutation is offered to Raghukulagurus.[20]

Besides these two Kāvyas there is one koṣagrantha of great importance. This is Saduktikarṇamṛta.[21] Sridhara Dāsa compiled this anthology in less than five years after the fight of the king from Navadwīpa. But the compiler has showed no awareness of this national catastrophe. On the other hand the king was profoundly praised, verses depicting Rādhā Kṛṣṇa's dalliances are being composed by the king and his sons. These indulgence in writing sensuous verses in the face of national disaster shows abundantly the bankruptcy of the existing feudal order.

The most interesting aspect of this compilation is its emphasis on Rāvaṇa which may, at first sight, seem perplexing. There are ten ślokas on Rāvaṇa ; and Rāvaṇśiraścheda (beheading of Rāvaṇa) got a prominent place. A defeated nation takes his revenge in an imaginative cloistral refuge. This extra indulgence in meaningless violence is something altogether different from the attitude shown by Abhinanda. But it is not far away from the tone of Sandhyākara Nandi. Here too a difference is discernible, one grew out of direct contest, another from an imaginative contest. All the ślokas cited here are written by anonymous poets excepting one. In the section Anusmrti there are two ślokas, where the son of Kauśalyā was recalled, and the name of Daśānana was cited.

At Triveni, Hooghly, there is a tomb, now in a delapidated condition, of Jāfarkhān Gāji The Gāji came to Triveni between 1290 to 1299 A.D. The tomb was created with the materials of temples of Jaina, Buddhistic and Hindu temples demolished by the Gāji and his followers Some proto-Bengali inscriptions are found. On the outside walls of the tomb along with some mutilated Hindu-Buddhist icons and terracottas.[22] Rakhaldas Bandyopadhya has made an interesting study on the decipherment.[23]

These are the readings of those inscriptions –

1. Śrī Sītā nirbāsana. 2. Abhiseka.

3. Śrī Rāmena Rāvaṇa badah. 4. Khara Triśirā badham.

There are some stone lintels (not terracottas), depicting some exploits of Rāmacandra. One of the lintels depicts Hunumāna as a warrior, another depicts Rāma breaking off the bow of Hara. Rāma is also present in the Daśābatāra pannel, just a sculptural echo of Jayadeva. Even here Rāma was not seen in the garbhagṛha ; still he was not receiving any Pujā.

IV

Right from the very beginning of the Gupta rule Rāmacandra with his associates was winning reverence and adoration from the people of Bengal, yet he was seldom recognised as a deity to be worshipped, daily or seasonally. He is symbolised as an ideal that has encircled out life to make it more comfortable, ethical and endurable.

As a social philosophy the Rāma legend had to pass through different stages, with the assistance of the Gupta rulers it came to Bengal with an important role to play. It continued vigorously to play a significant role in the growth and development of feudalism in Bengal. This legend enthused the minds of the people, gave an ideal to be observed in their every day life. It acted as a protective force for our family life and a powerful element in cementing feudal relations.

Thus the Rāma legend organised our family life out of the oldribal isolotion, coordinated the court-life and strengthend the civic life. From the tenth century onward the Pāla rule could not cater any benefit to the people. So Rāma who was a protector and coordinator of family virtues became a vanquisher of enemies .The killing of Rāvaṇa became very urgent, because he was an anti-social force. The successor of the Pāla rule did not envisage any new social system. They came from a distant land to a new environment. They generated

only sectarian rivalry of different dieties, could not check the resentment of the people against high prices and heavy taxation. The more problem-ridden the kingdom became, the more the poet sang about these vain glories of the ruling monarch, whose achievements a Vālmīki or a Vyāsa could not properly describe.

Hence the Rāma cult had lost its political validity, as it outlived its necessity to push our social development to a logical point. Really the time was out of joint.

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11. Haricaritam Caturbhuga, S. Bhattacharya, Asiatic Society of Bengal.
12. Memoirs of Archaeological Survey of India. No. 55.
13. Excavation of Taharapur, Bengal Rai Bahadur, K. N. Dikshit, Delhi 1938 p. 57.
14. Banga Bhumika,—Sukumar Sen, Calcutta p. 176.
15 Report of V. R. S. Rajshahi.

16. Report of the Ashutosh Museum, Calcutta University.

17. Inscription of Bengal,—Majumder, V.R.S. vol-A Valmiki or a Vyasa may be able to chart his dieds. What we strive for (here) is only to purify our speech by bathing it in the Heavenly river i.e. the Ganga of his fame.

18. Madhainagar copper plate of Laksmana Sena, Majumder pp. 109·114

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The Ramayana in Orissa

Gouri Kumar Brahma

The Rāmāyaṇa is an epitome of ancient Indian culture and civilisation. There is a saying in Oriya which means, 'Seetā' of the Rāmāyaṇa and the 'Geetā' of the Mahābhārata are the two cotyledons of Indian culture. Such sayings do high-light undoubtedly the extraordinary glory that the two celebrated epics of this ancient land of Bhārata Varṣa have enjoyed for centuries past.

In Orissa, when we talk of the Rāmāyaṇa, we are reminded immediately of three Rāmāyaṇas, namely,

1. The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmikī
2. The Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa
3. The Rāma Carita Mānasa of Tulasidāsa.

Several translations of these Rāmāyaṇas in Oriya bear eloquent testimony to the fact that people of Orissa are also great devotees of Rāma cult even though they are basically and essentially the worshippers of Lord Jagannātha of Puri. From the days of Lord Śaṅkarācārya who visited Puri perhaps in the lst quarter of the 9th century A. D., Puri has gained immense importance as the most sacred centre of pilgrimage in India. It came to be known since then as the 'Pūrva-dhāma' on the sacred seat of pilgrimage of Eastern India and religious minded people from the whole of India have been visiting Puri as a pious duty (and not merely for sight-seeing). Lord Jagannātha is, no doubt, primarily a Vaiṣṇavite deity as he is known as Puruṣottama (and the place, 'Puruṣottama-Purī', from which, its present name, 'Purī' has been derived through phonetic corruption). But he is considered by the followers of the various cults and creeds of India—not excluding the Buddhists and the Jainas, as their

Highest Object of worship. Thus, Jagannātha has been described by the poets of Orissa as identical with Rāmacandra and both of them have been shown as identical with Parama-Brahma in His 'Saguṇa-state of manifestation.' Thus developed in them a fascination for the worship of Jagannātha as Viṣṇu, Kṛiṣṇa and Rāmacandra. As a matter of fact, the most famous Rāmāyaṇa of Orissa is known as the 'Jagamohana Rāmāyaṇa'. It means, the poet (Balarāma Dāsa) could write it only by the grace of Jagamohana or Jagannātha of Puri, where he lived and completed this stupendeous work running to about 190000 lines of about 14 or 15 letters each.

Even though, the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa and the Rāma Carita Mānasa are regarded as important works in the field of worship of Śrī Rāmacandra, still, the 'Rāmāyaṇa' signifies only the famous poetical work by Vālmikī. This is universally accepted in India to be the first great work on ,Rāmacandra' and its impact on all the Indian Languages is great indeed. In the following paragraphs, an attempt is made to discuss two important aspects of the Oriya renderings of the Rāmāyaṇa. They are ;—

1. Translations
2. Adaptations

We may take them up one by one.

Translations

When we think of translations, the Sanskrit word 'Anuvāda' comes to our mind immediately. Literally, this means, reproductiod of the ideas of the original text without any distortion. But poets and writers in olden days never stuck to this sense of the woid 'Anuvāda'. Instead, they used to in corporate, whereever possible, their own idas or ways of expression resulting sometimes in glaring differences when compared with the original. This feature of the poets' own creations and their incorporation in the main text are more conspicuously seen in the beginnings of the various chapters and also in their concluding stanzas.

In the field of Oriya literature with Saralā Dāsa of the mid 15th century as the first great poet of the language, (apart from poetical camposidians pertaining to Buddhism and Nāthism beginning from the 8th century A. D.) the story of the Rāmāyaṇa found its first illuminating expression in the Mahābhārata of the same poet, the father of ancient Oriya poetry. But, translations came up much later. Even Balarāma Dāsa's (who was born round about 1470 A. D.) Jagamohana Rāmāyaṇa, the Oriya counter-part of the works of Mādhava Kandalī in Assamese, Kṛittivās in Bengali, Raṅganātha or Bhāskara in Telugu, Kambanin Tamil, Pampā in Kanarese, Śrīdhara in Marathi, Giridhara in Gujarati etc. is not at all a translation of the Vālmikī Rāmāyaṇa. He wrote his own Rāmāyaṇa on the story-etements of the Vālmikī Rāmāyana displaying his astounding originality at every step. Translations came up much later no doubt but none has either tarnished his glory as the most famous Rāmāyaṇa-writer of Orissa. Hence, the mere fact that A, B and C were good translators of the Vālmikī Rāmāyaṇa may give them a place in the history of Oriya literature no doubt, but, some non-translators like Balarāma Dāsa will still carry the Oriya readers with them with the same confidence and appreciation as has been the case for centuries past.

The following are the well-known translations of the Vālmikī Rāmāyaṇa in Oriya :—

1. The Arsha Rāmāyaṇa by K. C. Rajendra 18th cent.
2. The Vālmikī Rāmāyaṇa by K. B. Patnaik 19th cent.
3. The Vālmikī Rāmāyaṇa by Kapileswar Vidyābhooshan 19th cent.
4. The Vālmikī Rāmāyaṇa by Fakirmohan Senāpati 19th cent.
5. The Vālmikī Rāmāyaṇa by Bhagavat Ch. Dān 20th cent.
6. The Vālmikī Rāmāyaṇa by Ratnakar Gargavatu 20th cent.
7. The Vālmikī Rāmāyaṇa by Bāla Krisna Kar 20th cent.
8. The Vālmikī Rāmāyaṇa by Lingarāja Misra in prose
9. The Vālmikī Rāmāyaṇa by K. C. Pradhan 20th cent.

These apart, there are a few more translations of the

present century but no comments on them are possible as they are under personal possession and have either not been published so far or brought into some public library. Some of these translations generally speaking, follow the original slokas in the serial order no doubt but in many places, there are several stanzas that belong to the translators only. In the beginning and concluding stanzas of several chapters or books, the poets have added their own invocations of gods or goddesses in an atmosphere of deep devotion. But all the same, some of them have followed the original only freely.

In the case of only two translations in particular, it may be said that they are faithful to the original to a great extent. They are the Rāmāyaṇas by Fakirmohan Senāpati and Bālakriṣna Kar. But the only Oriya prose translation of the Vālmīki Rāmāyana by Pandit Lingarāja Misra is the most reliable work in Oriya for any one who wants to know what actually is contained in the celebrated work of Vālmīki. In it are given the original Sanskrit slokas and their meaning in clear prose so that there is no scope for deviation.

Of all the translation in verse, the one by Kriṣṇa Chandra Patnaik appears to be more poetical. This may also mean that in some places, the poet has not taken pains to retain the ideas of the original slokas either intact or in order with logical rigidity. It is very popular specially in South Orissa.

Adaptations

There are about a dozen works which are, more or less, adaptations of the original V. Rāmāyaṇa in Sanskrit but of them all, the Jagamohan Rāmāyaṇa is the best and the most popular. It was written by 1500 A. D. by Balarāma Dāsa of Puri who was the eldest of the five followers of Śrī Caitanya during his stay in Puri for long 18 years. It runs to seven books, but the originality of the poet is so great that it has been accepted by scholars as a completely new work on the story of the Rāmāyaṇa.

There are two recensions of this Rāmāyaṇa, known also as the Dāndi Rāmāyaṇa, 'Dāndi' is the name of the meter in

which the stanzas have been composed. One of the recensions is well known to the scholars of the state. But the second racension known as the 'Dakṣinī Dāṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa' – as the name indicates, is known only to the people of South (Dakṣinī) Orissa.

A remarkable difference between these two recensions is that the latter is almost double the size of the former and runs to about 190000 lines of nearly 14 letters each. In the Dāṇḍi metre the number of letters in each line varys from 11 to 17. This means, there are very many things in the South Orissa recension that the 'North Orissa' recension (if I may so put it) does not contain. Since this voluminous work has been published by the *Dharmagrantha* store of Cuttack only recently, not much can be said on it at this stage.

All the same, on the basis of the well-known recension, it may stated that Balarāma has neither followed the V. Rāmāyaṇa in the arrangement of matter in the seven books nor has he reproduced all the details of the various incidents and occurences found in the original. Instead, he has incorporated a number of episodes collected from some other Purāṇs and has tried to fit them with some stories woven into the texture of the main plot. Some of these may be stated here to elucidate the point in question.

1. In Book No. I (Bālakāṇḍa), he has given fantastic details regarding the various steps taken by Jarata to capture the young sage Ṛṣya-ṣriṅga. The marriage of this sage with Śāntā, compiled from the Agni Purāṇa has been described beautifully here. The episode of Hariścandra is also found in this book.

2. In the Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa, a story relating to the previous birth of Mantharā (maid-servant of Kaikeyē) has been given.

3. The story of the elopement of Leelāvatī, the episode of a cock getting a boon, the references to some remote areas in north-Orissa like Bonai and Bamanda (independent states in pre-independent India in Orissa) are some of the

new things that we find in the 3rd Book (the Kiskindhyā Kāṇḍa).

4. In the Sundarā Kāṇḍa, the role of Hanumāna as a magician, the condition of the Brāmiṇs in the Kaliyuga, the worship of 'Rāmeswara' by Rāmacandra for being crowned with success in his attempt to rescue Sītā are some of the deviations from the original.

5. In the Laṅkā Kāṇḍa alias the Yuddha Kāṇḍa, the episode of Hanumāna and Bharata, the story of one Śantha Paṇḍā and several other things mark out the difference of the Jagamohona Rāmāyaṇa from the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.

6. In the Uttarā Kāṇḍa, the story of king Nimi, the episode of Urvaśimitrāvaruṇa etc. etc. are the fresh addition in to the Jagamohona Rāmāyaṇa.

Further, Balarāma has not followed the V. R. in the division of the main plot into seven sections known as Kāṇḍas. For example, the crossing of sea by Hanumāna is found in the Kiskindhyā Kāṇḍa in the V. R. where as it is found in the Sundara Kāṇḍa here. Some of the important incidents found in the Yuddha Kāṇḍa in the V. R. have been set in the Sundarā Kāṇḍa by Balarāma. A correct estimate of the social and historical significance of Balarāma's Rāmāyaṇa requires a study of the social institutions he describes elaborately as well as an analysis of the various wars and weapons of war. It is presumed that Balarāma was an eye-witness to the wars fought by the foot soldiers (Pāiks of Orissa—from the Sanskrit, Padātika) of Orissa to maintain their independence. Hence, his descriptions of the wars are life-like, full of emotion and poetic fervour.

Similarly, the Orissa of the 15th and the 16th centuries from the stand-points of social customs and practices, religious rites, feasts, fasts and festivals, educational patterns, dance, drama and music, town planning, rural life, dresses of men and women, ornaments, items of food and drink, pilgrimages, priesthood, various types of characters etc., is found vividly described. No historian, however scholarly and resourceful he may be, can present such a colourful picture of

the people of Orissa five centuries ago as has been successfully and admirably drawn by Balarāma Dāsa.

The brief space that is available to me does not permit any further discussion on the Jagamohan Rāmāyaṇa. But one feels impelled to highlight the poetic vision of Balarāma as reflected in his concept of Rāma-Rājya, the realisation of which was the life's mission of Mahatma Gandhi in our own days.

Balarāma says that with the birth of Rāmacandra, a new wave of consciousness (which may be likened with the concept of the supra-mental consciousness of Sree Aurobinda) spread out in all directions. The capital city of Ayodhyā pulsated with new life. Very soon, economic disparity in the society disappeared. Those without issues were blessed with children, adding happiness to family life. Diseases were no more in vogue and human misery was rooted out. The miserly people became munificent and men and women became careful about good-conduct. The seasons of the year entertained the people with fruits and flowers. Even the ferocious aquatic animals repaired to distant places to avoid injury (by them) to human beings. The cows yielded milk sufficiently and every where, there was peace and righteousness. Needless to say that the poet envisaged such a society to evolve and no better theorisation of an 'ideal society' has perhaps been attempted by any political philosopher. There are several other Rāmāyaṇas (as they are popularly called) in Oriya which come under the category of adaptations with varying degrees of deviations, interpolations and eliminations. Some of them are :—

1. Teekā Rāmāyaṇa by Maheswara Dāsa
2. The Rāmāyaṇa by Jagannātha Dāsa of the Oriya Bhagavatafame.
3. Rāmabhakti Ratnāvali by Bālaka Rāma Dāsa
4. Rāmāyaṇa by Keshava Tripāthy
5. Jānakeesa Rāmāyaṇa by Seetā Caran Dāsa
6. Rāma Rasāmṛta by Vipra Rāma Dāsa
7. Rāmāyaṇa by Krisna Sinha
8. Sindhoo Rāmāyaṇa by Kripā Sindhu Dāsa

9. Raghunātha Kirtana by Narasinha Mātha
10. Rāmāyaṇa Sāra by Jayā Krisna Patnāik

In all these compositions, one finds only the kernel of the V. R. but the writers have excercised their own discretion in the elimination of vast portions of the V. R. and incorporation of fresh materials culled from the various other texts on the Rāmāyaṇa as the purāṇas.

The Ramayana in Kavyas and other forms of literature :—

Kāvyas in Oriya on the story of the Rāmāyaṇa are more than one hundred. This form of literature began in the 16th century A. D. and the first known Kāvya is 'Rāma Bibha' (The marriage of Rāma) by Arjuna Dāsa. The most significant contribution to the field of kāvya-literature is the Vaideheesa Vilāsa by Upendra Bhanja (circa 1675 to 1735). It was a challenge to the theoretical scholarship of India and is held high with esteem even by those who consider the Guru Trayī (or the Kāvyas by Bhāravi, Māgha and Śrī harsha) as the best of the scholarly poetical works in the entire history of Sanskrit literature. There are some stanzas that have even twenty four different meanings. The invocatory stanzas dedicated to Hari (which have about twenty five meanings) contain about thirty adjectives, all qualifying Hari. But every one of the words (adjectives) is found to describe the glories of as many as one dozen gods and godesses such as Viṣṇu, Śiva, Durgā, Gaṇeś the Sun (Sūrya) Bṛahmā (the creater), Rāma-candra, Jagannātha, (of Puri in Orissa) etc. All the three Ganges (river) i.e, the celestial (Mandākinī) the terrestrial (Bhāgirathī) and infernal (Bhogavatī) have been described in a stanza (where every word is interpreted to bring out the special characteristics of each one of the three currents of the Ganges as described in the Purāṇas). No other Kāvya has been able to overshadow it until our own days.

Apart from Kāvyas, we have several plays, short poems, and diverse types of semi-dramatic forms such as leelas, yātras

etc. on the Rāmāyaṇa, even in folk-literature, there are stories on the Rāmāyaṇa.

The Rāmāyaṇa has penetrated into the lives of the people at large and has become a part of the very existence of the nation. The Tapaswinee of Gangadhar Meher (1862-1924) is a Kāvya based on the punishment of Sītā and in the intensity of pathos, I personally think, it has no parallel in Indian provincial literatures.

There are about half a dozen really good translations of the Adhyātma Rāmāyāṇa and the least 10 translations (including one in prose) of the Rāma-carita-Mānasa of Goswami Tulasi Dāsa.

Folk-Elements In Jagamohana Ramayana

Narendra Nath Misra

'The Rāmāyaṇa', according to Winternitz, is 'a work that is popular epic and ornate poetry at the same time'.[1] Vālmīki 'first shaped the ballads which were scattered in the mouths of bards, into the form of a unified poem.[2] As a true popular epic Rāmāyaṇa, in course of centuries, has become a property of the Indian people as a whole. Popular sayings and proverbs bear witness to the familiarity of the people with the stories of the Rāmāyaṇa. It has become a source of inspiration to poets writing in various modern Indian languages since the 11th century when the Rāmāyaṇa was first written in Tamil. Balarāma Dāsa's Rāmāyaṇa in Oriya was composed during the reign of king Pratāprudra Deva (c 1500 AD) and claims to be one of the earliest versions of the Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇa among the Aryan group of morden Indian languages. It is a gigantic work incorporating in it various recensions of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa and the Rāmāyaṇa-story found in other Purānical works like the Padmapurāṇa, Skanda Purāṇa and Agni Purāṇa. But this is not all. It has been aptly said, "Balarāma Dāsa as a national poet, has sung for the people and by making Orissa a miniature world by itself has taught his countrymen to love the land of their birth."[3]

Balarāma Dāsa's Rāmāyaṇa has several versions, one prevalent in the nothern part of Orissa and another in the southern part. The manuscripts are found from some parts of the present Andhra state in the South Madhya Pradesh in the west and Bihar and West Bengal in the North. Almost in every important village of Orissa and the 'matha's a palm-leaf manuscript of Balarāma Dāsa's Rāmāyaṇa is pre-

served and worshipped along with other popular epics like Sāralā Dāsa's Mahābhārata and Jagannātha Dās's Bhāgabata. But no manuscript earlier than the 18th century is yet available.

Balarāma Dāsa's influence on the later day Oriya literature is very wide. From the 16th century onward taking stories from Balarāma Dāsa's Rāmāyaṇa various froms of theological and poetical works have dominated Oriya literature. In this process both popular and ornate literature have been enriched. But especially the Rāmāyanic legends have been deeply absor bed in folk literature. For example, in folk ballads we find various Rāmāyanic tales relating to Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumāna. In these ballads the realistic approach of the folk poety is more apparent than the high idealistic approach of the Sanskrit epic. We find Rāma, here, as a coward and not worthy of being a king who could not meet the challenge of a crooked woman Kaikei. The banishment of Sītā is not also appreciated by the folk. Hanumāna and Lakṣmaṇa are highly estimated by the folk as heroes and devoted followers of Rāma.

On the folk-tales the influence of Rāmāyaṇa, though indirect, yet strongly marked. Often we find a beautiful, simple-hearted princess imprisoned by a crooked giantess, but always a prince comes to her rescue. This has similarity with Rāma's rescuing Sītā.

Oriya folk-songs and folk sayings amply reflect Balarāma Dāsa's epithets. There is a popular saying— the sin committed by one hand is not shared by the other. In the Laṅkā Kāṇḍa of Balarāma Dāsa's Rāmāyana there is a long dialogue between Rāma's right and the left hands before he was going to throw his fatel arrow on Rāvaṇa who happens to be a Brāhmin. When his right, hand touches the ear, the left hand accuses the right, saying that the latter takes delight only in eating but retreats in the face of war. But the right hand replies—I don't fear war, but I fear the great sin which is going to be committed by killing Rāvaṇa, a Brāhmin. So I want to consult Rāmacandra, coming closer to his ear as to

whether he will be solely responsible for this sin. There is another saying—Give, let give and then only you get. Balarāma Dāsa has taken these words as a motto to distinguish between men and giants in Sundarā Kāṇḍa Here Hanumāna reports Rāma about the characters of the giants of Laṅkā. The giants are very religious in their daily life—they always recite Veda, the sacred fire of Homa is never extinguished there, they perpetuate hard penances inflicting severe pain to their body still they are cruel at their heart. They are not kind and never offer alms always disappointing beggars. Here only they differ from us, the kind hearted human beings.

In the Jagamohana Rāmāyaṇa, the popular mythical way of interpreting common place things is noteworthy. We have a type of popular musical instrument made out of two pieces of wood, called, Rāmatali'. There is a type of folk-singer called—Dasakathia who sing mostly Rāmāyaṇa—tales current in South Orissa. In the Laṅkā Kāṇḍa just before the starting of the war with Rāvaṇa, the soldiers of Rāma could not find a befitting war drum to silence that of Rāvana's tent. So they approached Rāma and Rāma solved it by febricating this instrument. His whole army of monkeys and bears, were delighted with this instrument. There is another story about the origin of mushroom. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa being ascetics of the forest had only a small umbralla of palm-leaf to protect their heads from rain and sun. But Rāvaṇa, on the other hand, had a huge 'chhatra', a picturesque cloth umbralla beautifully decorated with coloured applique. It was offending to the soldiers of Rāma. So they requested Rāma firsl to tear the umbrella of Rāvaṇa to pieces beyond repair. Rāma by a shower of arrows cut the umbrella to pieces and scattered them over a wide area beyond the reach of Rāvaṇa. Thus came up the mushrooms of various colours when rain showered like arrows. In winter trees of the forest are denuded once in a year and there are mountains standing bald headed without green foliage. According to Balarāma Dāsa's Rāmāyaṇa this happens because of Rāma's curse to trees that only murmured and to mountains those never spoke to the queries

of Rāma about Sītā. The crane has become white as hot tears of Sītā, while crying, fell on it. Names of three princely states of Orissa are attributed to the story that in the forest or Banāi Rāma's army had lost their route and in Ronāi they took the oath to avenge Rāvaṇa through war and they took a turn to the left at Bamanda.

The language of myth always inspires awe and wonder and gives a concrete shape in our imagination to objects beyond our rational conception. While describing the 'Meghanāda pacheri', the great outer wall of Rāvaṇa's fort Balarāma Dāsa describes that it looked like earth from heaven.

Rituals play a vital role in the life of the folk from birth to death. In Balarāma Dāsa's Rāmāyaṇa we find rituals performed at the time of the birth of a child, during the pregnancy of a woman, in marriage and the like. The queens of Daśaratha being childless worshipped goddess Sathi placing her image among seven dry fish with vermilion, collyrium and yellow cloth. When their children were born they performed 'Sathi Osa' on the sixth day so that the goddess would write the future on the children's forehead.

The folk-mind while facing the weal and woe of life worships fetish gods and goddesses around the home, on the way in the forest and on the bank of rivers, under the banyan tree standing on the outskirts of the village and everywhere. They are made of a lump of earth, a log of wood, a piece of stone, even a heap of sand raised before a bath to be washed away in the next moment. After bathing in the river Chandrabhāgā, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā worshipped a tree called Rudrakṣha bṛkṣa. They also worshipped goddesses like Bulai Caṇḍi, Rāmacaṇḍi and Pasana Caṇḍi and Lord Śiva, Bālukeswara. Once after taking his bath in the river Rushikulya Rāma wanted to worship a Śiva Liṅga but none was available there. At last Lakṣmaṇa brought the crest of a gourd and thus the worship of Tumbeswar Śiva was initiated. At last Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā worshipped their own self symbolically identifying themselves with Jagannātha,

Balarāma and Subhadrā. In this way the popular religion in the form of ritualistic performances and worship of fetish gods and goddesses allured the poet. We find him fully identifying himself with the people.

Last but not the least are the popular stories scattered here and there in the Jagamohana Rāmāyaṇa. While studying Oriya ballads a scholar has sorted out a large number of such stories.[4] As our knowledge is limited we cannot safely guess whether such stories are peculiarly found in the Oriya epic or else where in other Indian languages. Only Dr. K. Bulke's Rāmakathā throws scanty light on this matter. Some of these stories no doubt throw light on historical and social events and some of them might be prevalent in the society prior to the existence of Balarāma Dāsa's Rāmāyaṇa and of our epic poet "obviously respected the oral tradition and freely made use of the folk elements confident of their appeal to the masses".[5] Out of hundreds of such stories let us deal with only a few.

To please Gaurī the narrator of Rāmāyaṇa, Śaṅkara, tells the tale of a wine dealer's wife and a hermit. The hermit observes penances abstaining from worldly pleasures and sits in meditation on the bank of the Gaṅgā. The wine dealer's wife, a paragon of beauty happens to pass that way and the hermit falls in love with her at the first sight. It is a great sin to deny the wish of a brāhmiṇ. So the lady invites him to her hut. When the lady and the hermit were about to indulge in sex the husband knocks at the door. Finding no means of escape the hermit entered a large empty wine vessel. The wine dealer pours wine without knowing that the hermit is inside and the hermit died. The ballad opens with a brief description of the austere life of the hermit and the beauty of the wine dealer's wife. But the dialogue between the hermit and the lady is picturesque throbbing with amorous emotions. The sufferings of the hermit inside the wine vessel described in a few lines is touching. It inspires a sense of sympathy as well as humour. Similarly there are many other stories like the Maruta rāja and Lilāvatī, the story of the squirrel and the

crane where the righteous is rewarded and the evil is punished. But there is another set of story where the popular faith on one's own effort is honoured. Leaving his palace and princely comfort when Rāma entered the forest with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa, they first took rest under a mango tree. Tired Sītā slept on the floor. Rāma went through deep depression. Lakṣmaṇa solaced him telling him the story of the parrot and myna when they were carried by a hawk. The male bird, inspite of its prowess was feeling himself dead. But the female inspired it to fight unto the last. Jointly they struck the hawk which was in mid-air with its two preys. Thus the innocent pair of birds were saved and the hawk died.

While surveying all these materials selected at random from a monumental work like Jagamohana Rāmāyaṇa, it will be evident that there has been a synthesis of different cultural traits of the nomadic forest tribe, the cultivators and the warriors. The materials dealt in an original way by our poet are deeply related to oral traditions and folk-life and the epic as a whole while presenting regional cultural traits in no way loses its universal appeal. After all it is Jagamohana Rāmāyaṇa which is supposed to charm the entire world and which has flowed from the mouth of the Lord of the universe, Lord Jagannātha and the poet being only an insignificant tool in this process of creation.

1. A History of Indian Literature (1972), Vol. I, pp. 476.
2. Ibid. pp. 475.
3. B. C. Mazumdar—Introduction to Typical Selections from Oriya Literature.
4. Oriya Ballads: by Dr. S. Mahapatra. (An unpublished Ph. D. theais of Visva-Bharats).
5. Ibid.

The Impact of the Ramayana on the Socio-Cultural Life of Orissa

Upendra Nayak

The Rāmāyaṇa of sage Vālmiki, the first epic in India, stands on the bed-rock of lofty idealism, spiritual consciousness and liberal humanism as a beacon light that illumines the path of millions of Indians. It is inspiring and edifying for it is impregnated with politics, religion, economics, sociology and subtle analytical philosophy which revolve round itself. Hence it has been exercising lasting influence down the ages for its harmony of the physical and metaphysical values, and there is no doubt that it will exercise perennial ninfluence for ever.

And historical proofs testify that its supreme and superb value-centric anecdotal idealism which is salubrious to man's inward and outward, mundane and extra-mundane existence, has drawn in to its gamut the whole range of Asia. Critics are unanimous over the impact of the *Rāmāyaṇa* on the folk literature and architecture of oriental countries such as Indo-China, Cambodia, Siam, Burma, Java, Malayasia, Cylone, China etc.[1]. Although the *Rāmāyaṇa* eulogises the significance of Bhagabān who descends on earth in the form of incarnation to annihilate the devil and save the saintly,[2] it sings in high tone the miraculous worldly deeds of Lord Rāmacandra, unflinching adherence to keep up pledge for his father, and his ideal monogamy. In addition it also intensely focuses on the chivalrous Lakṣamaṇa's love for his eldest brother, Bharat's supreme sacrifice, Sītā's immaculate character as a chaste lady and above all the austere character of Rāvaṇa even though depicted as an anti hero or villain.

This is the ethos and ethics of the *Rāmāyaṇa* for which it has captivated all. There is no definite proof to date the rise of Rāma cult or Rāma sect in India.

It is quite true that Bhagabān Rāmacandra has been described as one of the ten incarnations of supreme Lord 'Viṣṇu' in books like the *Mahābhārata* and the *Gītagobinda* by Vyāsadeva and Jayadeva respectively. But erudite scholars are unable to ascertain accurately the exact date of the incarnation of Śrī-Rāma.[3] Moreover, whereas innumerable temples have been built for the worship of 'Śiva', 'Viṣṇu', Durgā since time immemorial temples for the worship of Rāma are comparatively new, recently built (although a lot of temples are seen now-a-days). Rāmakṛṣṇa Bhāndārkar opines that there was no Rāma temple nor even the image of Rāma before the 11th century A. D.[4]. Inspite of such an opinion which doubts the ripeness of Rāma cult or Rāma sect in India, it is quite doubtless that Rāma consciousness has been streaming down unbroken in the hearts of the Indians from very ancient time. According to some critics 11th century A. D. may be accepted as the beginning of Rāma worship as Madhvacārya, the spokesman of Bramha sect of Vaisnavism had introduced the Rāma worship in South India by bringing for the first time the idol of warrior Rāma from Badrikāśram.[5]

Similarly, it is difficult to date the merger of Rāma cult in the Orissan religious main stream. Contradictory opinions have cropped up in regard to the rise of Rāma cult in Orissa, even though a very large number of epics, poems, mythological books depicting the Rāma's story are found in this region. Basing his observation on the description of Rāmagiri found in the famous verse Rāmabhidhāno Hari-rityuvaca, as composed in the great epic poetry *Raghuvaṁśam* of Kālidāsa, Dr. Nabin Kumar Sahu, a notable historian elucidates that Kālidāsa, by way of describing Utkal's Rāmagiri or Rāmkote mountain of ancient Kaliṅga obviously indicates that in the contemporary Utkal there was the worship of Śrī-Rāma and Kṛṣṇa in one. Hence it may be mentioned that Rāma worship was introduced in Utkal since the time of

Kālidāsa.[6] However this opinion of Dr. Sahu appears to require more scientific research. Surendra Mohanty, another famous critic, opines that it was quite natural that Rāma worship was introduced in Utkal after Rāmānuja, the exponent of Vaisnavite Śrī sect and that too, it occurred during the first phase of Bhakti movement in Utkal.[7] After the demise of Rāmānuja, Śrī-Rāmānanda another religious preacher, had introduced Rāma worship taking Śrī-Rāma as absolute Viṣṇu. This newly introduced religion of Śrī-Rāmānanda not only influenced the devotees of Utkal but has also magnetised such devotees as Kavir, Raidash, Dhamma, Pipa, Jogananda of Eastern India as a whole.[8] Rāmakṛṣṇa Bhāndārkar says that there was Rāma worship in ancient Utkal much before Narahari Tirtha, an exponent of Vaisnavism had established the idols of Śrī-Rāma and Sītā bringing them from Kalinga.[9] As an inscription of 1293 A. D. writes Narahari Tirtha's establishment of those idols, it can safely be deduced that Rāma cult was established in Utkal before the 13th century A. D.[10]

However Rāma-consciousness has been deeply rooted in Utkal due to the excellence and all-embrancing Epical glamour of the *Rāmāyaṇa* inspite of the late rise of Rāma cult in the religious arena of Utkal. In the hypnotic spell of time cults like Śaivaim, Vaisnavism, Śākataism have encountered ups and downs and yet they have paid due homage to Bhagabān Rāma, the protector of religion and the sublime idealism of the Rāmāyaṇa.[11] The Orissan art, architecture, sculpture, literature etc are highly essential to trace out the reason for the spell, splendour and spread of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and wide spread Rāma consciousness in Orissa. A notable historian like Kedarnath Mohapatra advocates that the *Rāmāyaṇa* had its impact on the Orissan art and architecture much before the creation of many Sanskrit and Oriya Rāma literature.[12] Temples in Orissa built from the 6th century A.D. to the 15th century A.D., have beautiful paintings and excavations of Rāmāyanic episodes like Rāvaṇa overthrowing the mountain Kailasa, abduction of

Sītā, Killing of Jatāyu, killing of disguised deer, killing of Vālī, war at Lankā, coronation of Śrī-Rāma etc. In this context some critics observe that a painting in the Rāṇī cave at Khaṇḍagiri near Bhubaneswara showing a bow and arrow chasing a deer is an artistic imitation of the disguised deer-episode depicted in the *Rāmāyaṇa.*[18]

The scene of Rāvaṇa's pulling out the mountain Kailasa engraved on the temple Satrughnaswar, a temple built during the reign of Mathar and Sailodbhaba dynesty and on the temple Parsurameswar built in 7th century A.D. and other scenes like the killing of the disguised deer, killing of Vālī, Śrī-Rāma's consultation with Sugrīva engraved on the eastern door of Subarneswar temple seem to have been based on the incidents of the *Rāmāyaṇa.* Similarly engraved paintings depicting Sītā's aubduction, the assassination of Jatāyu, Śrī-Rāma's penetration of the dense Saptasala jungle by means of an arrow, the killing of Vālī, the construction of the Setubandha on the Barahi temple built during the reign of Bhaumakara dynasty in the 9th and the 10th century A.D.

Likewise the scene of Śrī-Rāma's accompanying the army of monkies as inscribed on the Lingaraj temple, the captivating image of Rāma and Lakṣamaṇa on the Konarak and Chhateswar temple built in 13th century A.D., speak volumes of the artistic dexterity of Utkal. Besides sculpture, painting and engraved pillars bear the stamp of the *Rāmāyaṇa.* Many books in palm leaves preserved in the Orissa State Museum containing pictures of the *Rāmāyaṇa* can add further proofs.[14] Many engraved pillars depicting scenes like the birth of Laba and Kuśa and Sītā's labour room are found in the hilly areas like Gudahandi in Kalahandi district, Bikaramakhol in Sambalpur district, Sitabanjhi and Rāvaṇa Chhaya in Keonjhar district.

The cult of Rāma had got a similar patronage and recognition of the religious royal families of Utkal like other established religions. It is said that in the past king Pruthi of Durjaya dynasty had described himself as glorious as Śrī-Rāma in the copper plate found at Paralakhemedi in Ganjam district.[15] Moreover, he has exhibited his keen interest in

Rāma worship and in its propagation by introducing the *Rāmāyaṇa* of sage Vālmīki to the contemporary curricula and by rewarding Brahmachari Padmasarma a Rāmāyaṇa scholar.[16] Kings who were the devotees of Rāma have also constructed a large number of Rāma-temples in different parts of Orissa for the spread of Rāma cult. Among them are the big Raghunath Temple at Odagam in Puri district built by King Raghunath Singh, Sree Raghunathjee Temple at Dhenkanal district built in 1658 A. D., Raghunath temple in the palace of Keonjhar built in 1070 A.D. and many other Rāma-temple and monasteries stand as a testimony to the Orissan kings' deep faith in Rāma cult.

The ancient Sanskrit and Oriya literature of Orissa have also been truly patronised by these art and literature-loving king. May be for the deep devotion towards Rāma for his unparalleled character, or for the lofty idealism and well-woven plot of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, or for the spread of Rāma-story as directed by the patronising kings, many poets and writers of Orissa have created innumerable epics, epic poems and mythologies. *Anargha Rāghaba* by the poet Murari Mishra, *Rāmābhyndaya Kāvya* by Narayan Satakabi, *Rāghaba bilāś* by the great rhetorician Biswanath Kaviraj, '*Jānaki-bilāś* by Kavicandra Ray, Dibakar Misra, '*Dasgriba badha Mahakavya*' by Kavicandra Markandeya Misra, '*Rāghaba-jadaviya Mahākāvya* by Basudev Praharaj are only few to name which have contributed much towards the spread of Rāma cult. In case of Oriya literature, it can be said that the character of Rāma has been familiar through Oriya Folktales before it came into the realm of literature. Stories like 'The exile of the prince', 'Assassination of the demon by the Prince' which were in vogue in folk tales of Orissa have been indirectly influenced by the Rāmāyaṇa.[17] Dr. Kunja Bihari Das a renowned research scholar of Orissa Folk literature has discovered and analysed two *Halia Rāmāyaṇs* to justify the influence of the *Rāmāyaṇa* on Oriya Folk songs.[18] Many books of Oriya Mythology, Oriya epic, champu, ballad, choutisha, poi, padi, Lila, Suanga, Jatra and drama have been created by the deep

influence of the Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇa and Rāma consciousness.

With such proofs we can safely and correctly conclude that the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the world famous epic and Rāma consciousness, have both continued their impact since the 6th century on the Socio-cultural life of Orissa and her literature. Temples built for Rāma, celebration of religious festivals like Rāma Nabami, Sītā Aṣṭami etc, performance of plays on Rāma, creation of innumerable books on Rāma, daily recitation of the *Rāmāyṇa* in temples and monasteries and above all putting on Rāma mark on head and hand, utterance of the maxim *Rāma nāma satya he* at the time of carrying the dead body to the funeral pyre and painting and sculpture on the temples depicting episodes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* provide ample testimony in regard to the impact of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the proximity of Rāma consciousness to the socio-cultural life of Orissa.

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5. Do p. 162
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The Ramayana and its Impact in Oriya Literature

Gopal Chandra Mishra

It is well-known that the *Rāmāyaṇa* is the ancient India's earliest epic where Sanskrit was the flourishing literary language. The *Rāmāyaṇa* is a superb literary creation, unpremeditated art and replete with character study in depth. The supreme humanistic ideals of sacrifice, the spirit of conquest of self, the triumph of truth over falsehood is traditionally characterstic of Indian way of life. For ages India has cherished and worshipped the hallowed memory of beloved hero, Rāma, popularly called Nara-chandramā by Vālmīki. People in all walks of life, young and old, rich and poor, high and low have irresistably looked upon the *Rāmāyaṇa* as the source of their consolation in times of stress and trial and this outstanding epic continues to provide joy and guidance to the people. The poets and composers throughout the length and breadth of the country through centuries have found in the various stories of this epic a very powerful medium of expression of the poet's creative genius, and artistic ability. The tales that the Indian grandmothers narrate to their children are taken from the great epic the *Rāmāyana*. There is no area of Indian social life which is not deeply influenced by the great epic which has represented a long tradition of literary and cultural activity in our country. It has provided great impetus to build the national life of our country. The influence of the great characters of the Rāmāyaṇa like Rāma, Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata, Hanumāna, Sugrība and Bibhīṣaṇa have exercised immense influence on our regional literatures. Generally they represented the sum total of Indian life, its aspirations, frustrations and tense moments, the obstacles to mental and spiritual achievements. Consequently the emergence of literary writings in regional litera-

tures has become synonymous with the renderings, adaptations and translations of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in local vernacular and gradually it has evidently powerfully served in evolving different types of lyrical forms in our national literature and has proved to become the only vehicle of religious faith, social thoughts and political ideas. In the beginning the *Rāmāyaṇa* was secular in expression and it was composed in verses of various rhymes. The literary revival in national literature in each period has been marked by a profound change in interpretation of the incidents taken from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and in simplification of the literary mode of expression. The stories of adventures, exploits, sacrifices and heroic performances of great characters like Hanumāna and the extraordinary ideal life of illustrious king Rāma and devoted brother Lakṣmaṇa and Bharata have been depicted in detail in a language to appeal to the rural folk. Right from the twelveth century the whole of India embraced the *Rāmāyaṇa* with national pride and Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa in regional languages and their dialects and with their local colour soon transformed it into their own repository of literary knowledge, cultural heritage and intellectual phenomenon.

Rāma and Sītā are symbols of agriculture and round them has grown up a cultural myth. Rāvaṇa with his greed for wealth is opposed to agriculture. The various legends and myths described in the main body of this sublime epic explain the significance. The name Sītā literally means cultivated land, her two sons Lava and Kuśa indicating corn and grass. The name Rāma also suggests something spiritual and cultural deeper in meaning and content, quite peculiar to Indian life and history. The battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa symbolises the constant conflict between truth and flasehood, between virtue and vice and in doing so the *Rāmāyaṇa* points to a full and vigorous national life based on refined domestic virtues. All the historical and mythological elements in the *Rāmāyaṇa* have evidently been unified into a superb work of poetic execution to hold as a mirror of national life.

The heroic deeds and achievements of Rāma, the defeat of Rāvaṇa, symbolising the dramatic conquest of virtue over vice gave rise in subsequent centuries of Indian societies to a cult popularly known as the cult of Rāma and thus Rāma came to be regarded as the most loving idol and the focal point of religious, spiritual and philosophical ways of life in our country. Saints and people given to spiritual thinking believed that God manifests Himself in many ways and Rāma is one of His manifestations. Particularly the *Rāmāyaṇa* shows the earthly existence of the divine among men, of God's incarnation in the form of the prince of Ayodhyā. The need to acquaint the teeming rural folk not conversant with the original epic was increasingly felt by the poets and the mode and medium of communication was the local regional language. The ideals of Rāma and Sītā captured the imagination of the people of the different parts of our country and the central ideal of the *Rāmāyaṇa* as envisaged by the people was to overcome the evil, whatever may be the sacrifice.

The introduction of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in regional languages formed a part of the formative period of history in local dialects in ancient and medieval India and Oriya literature during this period is charactarised by literary attempts concentrating on the great theme of the *Rāmāyaṇa* by Vālmīki, the eminent classical poet of India. The local poets composed the *Rāmāyaṇa* in comprehensive and simple metre describing the various episodes and tales of the original epic and mental excellences of its heroes and heroines. The *Rāmāyaṇa* or the splendid bulk of literature on Rāma and Sītā was felt to be a wide and fruitful area in which the Oriya writers were lured to exercise thair minds. Not only the varieties of episodes and its extraordinary features but also its philosophical and speculative aspects offered a variety of theme and content to the rural folk to concentrate upon. The *Rāmāyaṇa* in local dialects proved popular not because they are great epic poems of religious import but they gave lucid expression to the cherished contemporary ideas about people and society.

The classical poets and folk poets vied with each other in

depicting the story of Rāma in their own way, so that each version is both identical with and different from the Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*.

The period during which the *Rāmāyaṇa* emerged in different Indian languages, on the model of Vālmīki's work belongs to the twelvth to the fifteenth century. The earliest work in Oriya based on the grand theme of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is one *Vilaṅkā Rāmāyaṇa* by Sarala Das, the first and foremost epic poet in Orissa during the fifteenth century. *Vilaṅkā Rāmāyaṇa* portrays the loftiness of Sītā's character through struggle and sacrifice in the face of demonic torture of 'Sahasrasira Rāvaṇa'. After Rāvaṇa was killed and Rāma returned to Ayodhyā completing his exile of fourteen years and when arrangements for his coronation were in full swing the stories of exploits of Sahasraśira Rāvaṇa of Vilaṅkā, reached him and the gods and goddesses were disturbed. When he conquered and suppressed Sahasraśira, Sītā in satirical vein enquirea of her husband, Rāmacandra, if he could defeat Sahasraśira without her as it was her power which was responsible for the annihilation of Rāvaṇa. The two characters 'Khal' and 'Bal' set to create dissension between Rāma and Sītā regarding one's supremacy of power over the other is a story incorporated at this stage. At this Rāmacandra probably hurt and wounded set out to face Sahasraśira. Although Vilaṅkā Rāvaṇa was killed by Rāmacandra it was not without Sītā's support. However *Vilaṇkā Rāmāyaṇa* establishes the power, greatness and nobleness of Sītā's character.

Vilṅkā Rāmāyaṇa particularly records an attitude towards women not only bold and adventurous but also having awareness of their immense capacity for participation in social life. Its theme partially derived from Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* may be considered as a tribute to the newly developing literary traditions in the province of Orissa. The *Rāmāyṇa* thus became significant of the appeal which it made to many contemporary literary masters and thinkers. Its presentation in local vernacular literature became the basis and enduring content of medieval Oriya literature.

The earliest product on the model of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* in Oriya is *Jagamohan Rāmāyaṇa*, popularly known as *Daṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa* so called because of the popular simple method employed. Its author is Balaram Das a saintly poet of the 15th century Orissa during the political reign of Pratap Rudra Deva of Solar dynasty. Balaram Das was also the senior most associate among his contemporary literary as well as religious masters such as Jagannath Das, Jasobanta Das, Ananta Das and Achyutananda Das who are known in mediaval Oriya literature as *Panchasakhā*. *Jagamohan Rāmāyaṇa* is a stupendous work executed against a larger canvas written in simple metre and style rich in consummate poetical description. Particularly this *Jagamohan Rāmāyaṇa* bears the authentic stamp of his unrivalled poetical genius and shows him as the foremost poet of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in medieval Orissa. The poet has expressed himself that he was attracted towards composing the *Rāmāyaṇa* after having heard about it from the Brahmins and he was ordained by Lord Jagannatha to take upon himself the task of writing *Rāmayaṇa* and he was of thirty years of age at the time. It appears that he spent most of his life at Puri (Puruṣottam Kṣetra) as a Śūdra by birth, he has faced the high class born Brahmin scholars in intellectual discourse, some times defeating them in philosophical arguments.

The works of Achyutananda Das provide an insight into the detailed facts on the life and achievements of Balaram Das. Pratap Rudra Deva, a descendant of the Solar dynasty (1435-1534) was in power when Balaram Das wrote and completed his *Rāmāyaṇa* The great Vaisnavite preacher Chaitanya Deva also visited Orissa during those years and the various spiritual developments in the country offered a background for production of literature, though it was overladen with religious exposition.

Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* provided the model only because Balaram Das has at many places worked upon the same independently. It can never be said to be a translation of the original, because this highly imaginative poet introduced new incidents and had added local colour and situations to

embellish his monumental work. The peculiarities of Balaram Das's *Rāmāyaṇa* consist in various aspects of its presentation of the original stories and episodes and its descriptions. The beginning of Balarama Das's Rāmāyaṇa is different from that of Vālmīki. In Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* Vālmīki enquired of Nārada as to who is the most celebrated and virtuous person on earth and Nārada replied that Rāmacandra of Ikṣyāku Royal family is the most extraordinary person, godlike and perfect. This led him to compose the Rāmāyaṇa. Rabindra Nath Tagore has written that Nārada assured him that facts are not so much real as the poet's imagination is. The poet's creation is more real than Ayodhyā. In the beginning Balaram Das has invoked the divine blessing of Lord Jagannath or *Purusottama* and then has sung the glories of the name of Rāma The local poet Balaram has narrated the birth of Rāmacandra for the annihilation of Rāvaṇa and this was described by Shankar to inquisitive Parvati Vedamatī, the daughter of the king Kuśadhwaja was born as Sītā and Viṣṇu as Rāma and the purpose was to get rid of Rāvaṇa. In every Kāṇḍa (canto) Balaram has recorded the gist of the original Kāṇḍa and at many places has abandoned the details and has added his own creations, although there is similarity in the number and content of Kāṇḍa (cantos). The story of Jarata and Rishyasringa and his marriage with the daughter of Daśaratha in Adikāṇḍa, the previous birth of Mantharā in Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa, Litāvati Haraṇ, the assembly of monkey soldiers and the mention of local places like Banai, Bamala in Kiskindhyā Kāṇḍa the entry of Hanumānā in Lañkā and his mysterious personifications, the conditions of Brahmins in the Kaliyuga as revealed in the dialogue of Rāma and Bibhīṣaṇa, the episode of squirrel and the worship of Rāmeswar by Rāma in Sundara Kāṇḍa, the dialogue between Bharata and Hanumāna at the time of bringing Gandhamādan hill etc, constitute the essential variations in Jagamohan Rāmāyaṇa from that of Vālmīki. In addition Balaram Das brought in local cities temples and forts in his work which are not found in Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa. In doing so Balaram Das has at

times depending upon ancient Purānas, effected many alterations, and ommissions of events in each Kāṇḍa. The notable feature about Balaram Das's *Rāmāyaṇa* is that the poet has claimed that the Lord Jagannath is the supreme poet of his Rāmāyaṇa and that is why its name is Jagamohan Rāmāyaṇa, the word 'Jagamohan' being synonym with Lord Jagannath. But the significance of Jagamohan Rāmāyaṇa lies elsewhere as it was packed with descriptions of contemporary social life and institutions. Balaram Das infused local colour into each description which made the work more attractive and acceptable to the people.

Balaram Das has portrayed the essential social and political conditions of his own time while presenting the original stories or episodes. The various social customs, the state of marriages prevalent in these days, the upbringing of children in families, the system of marriage party accompanying the groom to the bride's place, the mode of state publicity by appointed drum beaters, the different types of musical instruments, the supremacy of Brahmins in the society on account of their scholarly pursuits etc. have all found place in Balaram Das's Rāmāyaṇa in a perfect local setting.

In doing so the poet has shown extraordinary skill and has employed similies and metaphors which speake of his highly developed poetic imagination. Among the fresh innovations which Balaram Das infused into his work the story of the union of the male and femal 'Chakravāk' birds and Rāmacandra approaching them to ascertain information after the missing of Sītā from Panchvatī and the disturbed Chakravāk bird cursing and giving counsel to the grief stricken Rāmacandra on the duties of a householder and saint. He is forbidden to look at a women not to make love to a woman, willing or unwilling, married or unmarried, not to see the naked body of a woman, and all such acts constitute heinous sins beyond pardon. It is the sacred duty of a man to uphold the honour, dignity and status of a woman. On the other hand the duties of a woman in the guise of a wife, mother and sister and as a counterpart in family life have been

prescribed in vivid language taking the model of Kauśalyā, Sītā and Tārā. Jagamohan Rāmāyaṇa is less than a translation and more than an original creation. Like Madhab Kandalī's Rāmāyaṇa in Assamese (later half of the 14th century) and Kṛttibās Ojhā's Rāmāyaṇa in Bengali (15th century A.D.) Balarām Das's Rāmāyaṇa came to be widely read by the masses in the village of Orissa and the common reader obtained access into the main text of this wonderful epic. Like Tulasi Das's Rāma-Charit-Mānas in Hindi, Balaram Das's Rāmāyaṇa in Oriya created an awareness in the minds of the illitarate villagers about the viability and suitability of the Rāmāyaṇa as the medium of public education and religious teaching. The desire among the common man to conform to the model characters of the Rāmāyaṇa became a potent force in social life on account of which every home in a village considered a copy of the Rāmāyaṇa in palm-leaf manuscript as a priceless possession like Jagannath Das's 'Bhāgavata'.

A simple village folk believed in the perfect code of conduct as demonstrated in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and was immensely influenced by it in his social relations and outlook. The recitation and study of the Rāmāyaṇa came to be regarded as an attempt to organise one's life on the principles prescribed in the this great epic.

Balaram Das, as revealed in his work, was endowed with a keen insight into human nature, with deep observation and a poetic ability of sustained effect, and this was further enriched by his complete mastery over the language. His descriptions are replete with subtle emotion, grace and power of judgement of human actions. In fact the metaphors, and similies employed by him are extraordinary. Though profoundly religious in import his Rāmāyaṇa is full of deep significance for people of all walks of life. It is as highly adored by people as the Bible by the Christians. Thousands of people in rural Orissa read his Rāmāyaṇa daily. Thus it played an important part in social reconstruction and religious involvement of the people.

It can be said that Balaram Das's Rāmāyaṇa laid the foundation of a type of literature, and this was followed by a spate of poetical works, either a condensed form of original *Rāmāyaṇa* or lyrical works drawn upon a single or multitude episodes of original work. Gradually Rāmāyaṇa in its parts appeared in lyrical form, its noteworthy type being Baramasi Koili by poet Śaṅkara Das during the sixteenth century. Koili is a lyrical type of composition executed in the depth of music and arranged according to the order of the alphabets in Oriya language. This particular lyric characterised by lucidity of expression and depiction of pathos of a grief-stricken mother Kauśalyā in the event of exile of her darling son like Rāmacandra for fourteen years and in the poem devoted mother Kauśalyā laments over the imaginary sufferings and untold miseries that engulfed her child Rāma in exile in each season. This lyric is being sung and echoed in every corner of Orissa particularly by the semi Illiterate women in families. In course of passage of time this lyric has been an essential part of rural cultural and literary heritage of Orissa. Even the roving beggars in the streets are keen on reciting this song to appeal to the emotions of the listeners. The earliest Kāvya form of literary work derived from the theme of the Rāmāyaṇa is Rāma-Bibhā (The marriage of Rāma) by Arjun Das in the sixteenth century. Rāma-Bibha proved very popular in the villages of Orissa and it is one of the chief literary and imaginative works on the episode of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Its impact on the subsequent authors of the *Rāmāyaṇa* such as Pratap Roy in Sashi Shena, Kartik Das in Rukmini Bibhā, Narasingh Sen in Parimala, Dhananjaya in Śrirām Vilas, Upendra Bhanja in Lābaṇyabatī is to be noted.

It was during the seventeenth century that there appeared a rich harvest of direct or indirect influence in the Rāmāyaṇa literature in Oriya and the tradition of the compositions of the Rāmāyaṇa came to be recognised as a powerful literary medium. Haladhar Das wrote Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa (17th century), Maheswar Das composed Tikā Rāmāyaṇa. Mahadev Das and Telenga Gopal also produced Rāmāyaṇa in their own

style. But Adhyatma Rāmāyaṇa by Suryamoni Chyaopatnaik, Bichitra Rāmāyaṇa by Viswanath Khuntis about the close of the seventeenth century, designed in the Kāvya form of literature and treated in popular method is without paralle in Oriya literature and it is religiously revered in every household of Orissa on the same level as Haldhar Rāmāyaṇa or Keshab Rāmāyaṇa. Bichitra Rāmāyaṇa is characterised by a new style and treatment of the theme. The 17th century witnessed the rise of a new literary movement supported by the universal theme of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and its total mass appeal. This movement gathered momentum with the expansion of literature and the Rāmāyaṇa became a characterstic literary pattern of the contemporary period. Thus next to Balaram Das, Haladhaı, Keshab and Viswanath are the greatest literary geniuses of Orissa who glorified Rāma and his many deeds. But their works were not without their impact in other areas of literature. This was the age of classical and traditional poetry in Oriya represented by renowned poets like Dhananjaya Bhanja, Upendra Bhanja and many others, to treat the theme of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in the high ornamental poetic style. Great stress on the beauties of classical literature was laid upon the poet's vivid imaginations blended with strong erotic sentiments and thus the religious message was lost in the ornamental style of the well executed Kāvya. The poets who were masters of the traditional Kāvya style, sung in beautiful language exclusively in praise of lord Śrī-Rāmacandra and his consort Sītā. We find poets like Dhananjaya Bhanja and his grand son Upendra Bhanja of royal families producing vigorous and beautiful ornamental and narrative poems which received great impetus during and after their period. In developing their themes Dhananjaya Bhanja in his Raghunāth Vilas and Upendra Bhanja in his Supreme Kāvya 'Baidehi Vilās'.

Baidehi Vilās by Upendra Bhanja assumed a revised garb, though on traditional lines. Its theme is delived from the Rāmāyaṇa, but the poet treated it with imagination, skill and a sense of social involvement. While the poet safeguarded

the heroic character of Rāmacandra, social elements crept into the frame work of this erstwhile pure Kāvya. The work struck roots with music, elegance, ease and high poetic diction. Half of the beauty and power of this poetical work is the poet's creation. Upendra Bhanja's Baidehi Vilās was followed by several writers of epic and long narrative poems on the classical theme of the Rāmāyaṇa. Jadumani Mahapatra's Rahava Vilās in the later half of the 19th century is also a noteworthy narrative Kāvya and soon proved a fitting medium for village literates which provided them with substance, variety and intellectual treatmant within the range of their interest and emotion. All such narrative poetries on the *Rāmāyaṇa* show more of increasing interest in life around and less of devotional obsession. The villagers took delight in reciting the beauties of the lofty characters of Rāma, Sita, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and the supporting ones like Bibhiṣaṇa, Hanumāna every evening in their homes. The palm-leaf manuscripts on which the Rāmāyaṇa is written became an age old ritual in every village home, the fact being that the same story forms the central theme in poetry sometimes with slight variations. Besides, the traditional medium of poetry, in the later half of the last century when a pattern of prose writing evolved, the writers chose to popularise the *Rāmāyaṇa* through the medium of prose. The great galaxy of stories and episodes of the *Rāmāyaṇa* appeared in prose-form and Rāma Vilās by Kapileswar Vidyabhusan during the years 1870, is such an worthy example. Even the period following the years of ranaissance in Oriya literature due to the impact of the Western education and culture on India continued to witness the keen insterest of the authors to glorify the profound theme of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in their fresh literary forms, such as essays, sonnets, lyrics.

The translation of *Uttarrāmacarita* of Bhavabhūti from Sanskrit into Oriya by Madhusudan Rao and Sītā Banabāsa by Nanda Kishor Bal is an indicator of the lyrical beauties that the subject matter of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in part or whole is capable of not being satisfied with the poetical versions of

the Rāmāyaṇa in Oriya the more conscious ones employed effectively the dramatic medium to portray the ever-sacred and ever-important subject matter of the Rāmāyaṇa. Kampala Misra wrote the drama 'Sītā Bibāh' which paved a landmark in the sphere of mythological drama in Oriya.

Rāma Janma Nātak, Rāmāyaṇa Nātak. Rāma Nirbāsan (1909) Setu Bandha, Rāvaṇa Badha, Rāmabhiṣeka (1912) are the noteworthy works of dramatic treatment, based on the various episodes of Rāmāyaṇa by Pandit Harihar Rath. The absence of full dramatic excellences in those works is fully compensated by the dramatist's desire to preach the message of the Rāmāyaṇa among the people. The rural dramatic performances like 'Rāmlīlā' and Das Kathia like Hari Kathā are also traditionally devoted to spread to the holy saga of the righteous life and deeds of Rāmacandra. 'Rāmlīlā' genuine folk lyrical drama is extensively enacted in the villages of Orissa night after night. The performers sing the story of Rāma every evening in the heart of villages drawing large crowds. Such performances result in a wonderful combination of music, dramatic presentation, humour and sublime social philosophy. Even at wedding ceremonies songs are sung high lighting the union of Rāma and Sītā.

The glory of excellences and mythological importance of Rāmāyaṇa has even attracted the attention of modern poets like Gangadhar Meher whose Rāmāyaṇa 'Tapaswini' has proved to be a superb work of poetic art. Meher's Sītā in 'Tapaswini' though projected against mythological background represents the ideal Indian womanhood. The poet has succesfully attempted to portray Sītā on human level and one feels pity for the untold sufferings and sacrifices Sītā has undergone including her ordeal of fire. The eternal conflict between good and evil has been depicted and 'Tapaswini' is characterised by eternal grief and both Rāma and Sītā at the hands of the Oriya poets have risen to the height of nobility, over the mundane life.

In present day literature books continue to be written on the theme of Rāma, whether in story form or in lyrical

exuberance. Several scholars and biographers have produced the entire Rāmāyaṇa in simple and lucid prose for the juvenile readers. Pandit Lingaraj Misra has translated the entire Rāmāyaṇa in pedantic prose while Jagatbandhu Mahapatra translated the Tulasi Rāmāyaṇa in Oriya. Even in recent times, some of the periodicals have serialised the story of the Rāmāyaṇa in a comparatively revised pattern.

However the classical Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki has evolved a unique pattern of literature in Orissa and like Kamb Rāmāyaṇa in Tamil, Giridhar Rāmāyaṇa in Gujurat, Pompa Rāmāyaṇa in Kannara, Bhabartha Rāmāyaṇa and Rāma Vijaya in Maharastra, Rāmacaritam in Kerala and Kṛttivāsa Rāmāyaṇa in Bengali, the vast body of writing emanating from the Rāmāyaṇa whether in translations or adaptations has been able to create an awareness of a standard social behaviour, universal brotherhood, a model of ideal kingship, embodiment of love, truth and integrity, the impression being Rāma came to the earth to establish 'Dharma' and eradicate 'adharma'.

The Oriya poets like their counter parts in any other part of India brought Rāma down to the masses in their language, idiom, imagery. Even the folk songs in Oriya are not free from the impact and contents of Rāmacarita and it still continues to be perennial source of eternal inspiration and force to the masses. In the works of Tulasidās the greatest saint poet on the Rāmāyaṇa in northen India, "the story of Rāma is like nectar" and it always retains its freshness to enlighten and ennoble the people in every area of activity.

The Ramayana in the Folk-Traditions of Bangladesh

Mazharul Islam

The influence of the *Rāmāyaṇa* over the cultural life of the countries of Indian sub-continent is so great, deep-rooted and wide-spread that it cannot be measured by any length of description. The countries closer to India, such as Ceylon, Afganistan, Iran, Eastern Soviet Union, Southern China including Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan have also received and retained this influence in different spheres of their cultural and literary traditions in manifold ways. This is more true of the life and culture of the South Asian countries like Burma, Thailand, Singaporc, Malayasia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Phillipines and Japan. According to scholars, the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, in the form of an epic song, started to enter the South-Asian countries by the sixth century A.D. and gradually its branches were spread over a vast area of culture of these countries. Almost all the major languages of South-East Asian countries have owned the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and enriched themselves through the acceptance of the original themes and shaping them in their own patterns. Thus, the vastness of the influence of the *Rāmāyaṇa* over the Asian countries is not an easy task to handle with. Keeping this in view, I would like to restrict my discussion to the influence of the *Rāmāyaṇa* over the folk-tradition of Bangladesh.

Through the authentic writings of scholars like Dinesh Chandra Sen, Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, Dr. Sukumar Sen and few others, it has been established that the themes of the *Rāmāyaṇa* did not originate from Vālmīki alone. According to scholars, the themes current in the folk-tradi-

tion of India, entered the parallel themes, either in the name of Rāma or in some other names, were also known to the people of Iran, Soviet Union and in some countries of Europe. The credit, of course, goes to Vālmīki for his successful and brilliant compilation as well as for giving them the shape of an excellent epic, almost second to none in the world of epics, both for its high degree of literary worth and great virtue of cultural superiority.

It is painful that such a great work was kept completely away from the field of Bengali literature for several centuries prior to the advent of Muslims in Bengal. The *Rāmāyaṇa* themes, were, of course, current in the Bengali speaking area of India, but not in the written form of our literature. The history of Bengali literature proves that, it was because of the patronage and direct supervision of the Muslim rulers, who came over to Bengal to rule as well as to settle down permanently as citizen of this land, both the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, the two great epics of India, were first translated in Medieval Bengali literature. History also proves that the geographical area, now comprising Bangladesh, was the place where both these epics were translated first and then the tradition was followed in both oral and written froms for several centuries by the letters and unlettered bards of Bengal. Thus the stories and themes of these two epics, in both original and distorted forms, have been handed down to the present generation as a rich heritage of culture. Of the two epics, so far as the Bengali speaking people of both India and Bangladesh are concerned, the *Rāmāyaṇa* is no doubt more popular than the *Mahābhārata*. This has been so because of the fact that the household affairs, like the relations between husband and wife, between father and children, brothers and sisters, between the rulers and the ruled, have been so vividly and lucidly depicted in the *Rāmāyaṇa* that the people could find the reflection of their lives in the stories of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In this sense, the *Rāmāyaṇa* is closer to the life which appealed to the people of Bangladesh more than the *Mahābhārata*. The

stories related to warfare and fighting could not come closer to the heart of a Bengalī. The *Mahābhārata,* in spite of its greatness in so many respects, having wars, conspiracies and militant atmosphere, could not arouse the feelings of Bengali people as widely as the *Rāmāyaṇa* could.

It is now a widely accepted fact that the Bangali *Rāmāyaṇa,* beginning from Kṛittivāsa to Candrāvatī, differ in many respects, both in themes, forms, spirits and modes of expression, from the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki. As a matter of fact, the Bengali *Rāmāyaṇa* are practically the new creasion. Dinesh Chandra Sen has rightly observed, "The Bengali *Rāmāyaṇa* are our own poems and we should not be surprised to find that there has been a great departure in theme from the Sanskrit original. In its changed shape the epic has appealed not only to the literates but to the illiterate people of Bengal as well" (The Bengali Rāmāyaṇa, Calcutta University Press, Calcutta, 1920, p. 83). Along with unique qualities of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* was added the genius of Kṛttivāsa and Candrāvatī, whose simplicity, sense of humour, clarity of thoght and original creative urge were very much appealing to the people of Bengal at large. The poets of Eastern part of Bangladesh, who flourished during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, following the influence of Daulat Kazi and Alaol, the Court poets of Arakan kings, quoted from the *Rāmāyaṇa* whenever such occasions arose. Exactly the same was the case with Heyat Mamud and his followers in North Bengal during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The district of Mymensingh, the largest district of British India, where the poetess Candrāvatī composed her *Rāmāyaṇa,* is still considered as the widely influenced abode of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in the folk-tradition. The songs, the ballads, the tales collected from this vast area, even in recent times, indicate the wide-spread existence of the *Rāmāyaṇa* themes in the rural agro-based societies. Candrāvatī's influence, compared to the influence of Kṛttivāsa and others, seems to be greater in Mymensingh district.

The society of Bangladesh is mainly agrarian. Naturally,

the cultural pattern of Bangladesh is greatly tradition-oriented. Sixty thousand villages sp,ead over nearly fiftysix thousand square miles, are the dwelling places of more than ninety percent of the eightyfive million of this country. Dacca, the capital of Bangladesh, is the only city. Bangladesh may be called the country of villages where the age-old traditions are predominant and sophistication is almost unknown among the people. Folklore provides the main recreation to the societies of Bangladesh, like such other societies all over the world. Basides, Bangladesh, though geographically a different country today, traditionally or culturally she is not much different from the societies of Bengali speaking areas of Eastern India. What the people have inherited over few thousand years, can not be shaken off only because that the country has become a different one only three decades ago. The *Rāmāyaṇa* was and still is a major force in the traditional culture of Bangladesh. Of the *Rāmāyaṇa* themes, the ones provided by Kṛttivāsa and Candrāvatī have been popular, but the folks, throuh generations, have added and interpolated many themes in their own way. In folk-tradition, names of the poets and composers have been long forgotten, but their stories have been carefully retained. Through the process of creations and re-creations, shaping and re-shaping, the stories of the *Rāmāyaṇa* have strayed away from Kṛttivāsa and Candrāvatī and far away from Vālmīki. The stories of the *Rāmāyaṇa* have absorbed the myths, folk-tales, ballads and other elements of folklore. Sometime they have gone even beyond that. Stories from different strata of the society as well as of the religious groups, have been intermixed and blended together with the stories of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It should be noticed that the folk people have the quality of rising above all narrowness and religious prejudices in their art of creating, re-shaping and blending the themes and transmiting them to the next generation. Thus we get the themes of Karbala blended with the themes of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Jārī is a very popular type of song in Bangladesh. Its theme is mainly based on the historic events of Karbala,

After the death of Ali, the last of the four Caliphs, there was a tussle to capture power between Ali's two sons, Hassan and Hussain, who were the grandsons of Mahammad from his daughter Fatima's side on the one front, and Eazid the son of Mwabia, a rival of Ali on the other. Ultimately, the eldest brother Hassan was killed by poison and through conspiracy, Hussain, the younger brother, was brought to Karbala with his family, where the water supply was obstructed and Hussain was killed along with almost all the members of his family including the children, in a tragic battle. This painful event is remembered by the Muslims all over the world during the month of Maharram, the first Arabic month of Hizri Era. *Jāri* song depicts the picture of this event where the freedom of the singer is restricted and the themes are more or less fixed. Even then, the folk bards, in many cases, have been found to take as much freedom as they could. It is interesting to note that the themes of the *Rāmāyaṇa* did not even spare this fixed event and filled its arena with all its charm and pathos. In one of the *Jāri* songs, Hussain, being placed in a distressed position, laments in the following manner. Earlier, Hassan was poisoned to death.

Short summaries of two popular songs are given below :

I. We two brothers, left Madina city and came to Karbala as Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa went to the forest leaving the city of Ayodhyā. Lakṣmaṇa died by the arrow of Meghnad and in the same way Hassan was poisoned to death, Rāma weeps for the loss of Lakṣmaṇa, what would he tell his mother on his return ? I am Hussain, weeping too, for my brother, but shall I get the dear brother back again ?

II. In order to get the hands of Joynal, Hassan was killed and Joynal has been made a widow. Eazid, why have you become a Rāvaṇa who abducted Sītā and then killed Lakṣmaṇa ? As Rāvaṇa stretched his hands to ruin Rāma from this world, in the same way, brother, you see, Eazid is also coming towards me to finish me, and making all evil motives to trap

Joynab. Where are you, the hero Hanumāna, there is none to save me from this danger except you.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* themes could be traced from folksongs, folk-tales, folk-dramas, ballads, proverbs and folk-rhymes. Of all the elements of folklore, folksongs and folkdramas in Bangladesh *Rāmāyaṇa* themes most widely influenced the whole area. It should be mentioned that communalism and narrow animosity between the Hindus and the Muslims are almost unknown in Bengali folk tradition. Rather, folk-tradition in rural Bengal, specially of Bangladesh, makes a solid ground for the unity and mutual understanding of the two communities. The *Rāmāyaṇa* has made a rich contribution to this effect. In one of the *Jāri* songs collected by me, Ali, the son-in-law of Mahammad, the 4th Caliph, has been compared with Rāma specially because, as the poet believes, Ali was as brave and wise as Rāma and Ali's sense of justice and love for the people ruled by him, could find their equals only with those of Rāma. Not only in the *Jāri* songs, there are many common elements from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and Karbala episode taken in some of the dhana songs, Rāma's heroism has been remembered whenever there was a description of a duel between the two opposing forces of Hussain and Eazid. Hanifa, the step-brother of Hussian who came to Macca and Madina to take the revenge of the death of his two brothers Hassan and Hussain, was regarded as a symbol of heroism by the folk-poets. Hanifa has been compared with Lakṣmaṇa in respect of devotion to brothers and bravery in the battle-field. But of all the figures of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Hanumāna, the son of Pabana, the god of air, captured the imaginations of the village-bards more vividly than any body else. He lost his tail and burnt his face to extinguish the fire from his tail by the time when Laṅkā was burnt to ashes from that fire. Hanumāna took the mountain of Gandhamādan in his hand when he forgot the name of Viśalwakaraṇī, the plant prescribed to cure the wounds of Lakṣmaṇa and concealed the sun under one of his armpits so that he could reach Rāma before the dawn. All these strange activities, the heroic performances and faith-

fulness of Hanumāna, were sufficient to attract the attentions of the folks and their bards. In some of the dhana songs prevalent in the districts of Pabna, Bogura, Tangail, Kushtia, Faridpur, Jessore and Khulna, the speed of the messenger of Hanifa has been compared with that of Bīr Hanumāna (Hanumāna, the hero). Then again, the faithfulness of some of the soldiers who fought in the battle field after the tragic end of Hussian at Karbala, has been compared with that of Hanumāna. The folk-poets made some witty jokes with Hanumāna, but never expressed any disparaging remark regarding his apish pedigree.

The impact of the *Rāmāyaṇa* over the folk-dramas of Bangladesh is immensely manifasted in both themes and characterisation. A particular type of folk-drama prevalent in the district of Rangpur is known as Kuśan. It is about the songs of Laba and Kuśa. In the northern districts of Bangladesh, specially in the districts of Rajshahi, Dinajpur and Rangpur, the marriage songs sung during the marriage ceremony, are quite popuḷar. In some of these songs, the conjugal happiness of Rāma and Sītā is widely evoked by both Hindus and the Muslims. Among the most popular folk-dramas based on the *Rāmāyaṇa* themes, Rāma Rāvaṇer Pālā (The Story of Rāma and Rāvaṇa), Lakṣmaṇa Hatyār Pālā (The story of the killing of Lakṣmaṇa), Rāma Sītār Pālā (The story of Rāma and Sītā) etc., are well-known. I had the opportunity of viewing one such drama known as 'Rāma Rāvaṇer Pālā' arranged by the Muslim youths, all of whom are cultivators and illiterate, in a village populated entirely by the Muslims and situated in a ramote place far away from the town. I was told that the costly costumes of different characters of the drama were made by these youths from the fund raised from the enthusiastic villagers. Special mention may be made here that these youths are not professional and they perform this particular drama only on some occasion such as the Bengali new years' day, the first day of Falgun and even on the days of religious festivals like the 'two lids' and Maharram. I witnessed that there was no

stages, no curtain or screen of canvas or metal concealing the stage and the actors and actresses came openly and freely from the back to play their roles to a particular place fixed for acting. After the role of an actor or the actress was over, he or she just pushed himself or herself back and stood behind. Of course, the boys played the role of females, but they did not seem abnormal in that particular environment and situation. I enquired and came to know that the patronage came not from a particular person but from the people at large of the whole village. I was told that they would include some shorter stories also taken from the *Rāmāyaṇa* for their performances. This is a clear example of not only the influence of the *Rāmāyaṇa* over the traditions but also the secular character of the folks who possess the mental broadness to accept themes and ideas from other religions. Of course, so far as the *Rāmāyaṇa* is concerned, it seemed to have belonged not to a particular religious faith, rather it belonged to the whole of ancient Indian culture from where the streams of tradition flowed and the current came down to us through generations. Indian Muslims had changed their religion. but not the culture of this ancient land. The *Rāmāyaṇa* is a part and parcel of Indian culture over more than two thousand years and it is still a living force in both written and oral traditions of this sub-continent including the Bengali speaking areas of India and Bangladesh.

Tantric elements in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, have also come down to the people in their traditions. Rāma's worship of Durgā as introduced by Kṛttivāsa, may be regarded as a product of Tantric influence. The same is true about the appearence of Jogamāyā, a female deity, in the episode of Ahi Rāvaṇa and Mahi Rāvaṇa. We find both these elements in the folk-tradition of Bangladesh. When prince Bharata and his army reached Bharadwāja, the sage, they were served with rice and a kind of drink made from rice. It is interesting that, in the same drama presented by the Muslim youths, meat was also served along with rice and drink and the soldiers enjoyed the meat with great gusto. It is equally interesting that Rāma not only prayed to Durgā for the safety of his beloved wife Sītā,

but also he sent Hanumāna to a Muslim saint not far away from Dandakāraṇya and this Muslim saint, on hearing the plight of Rāma, prayed to Allah for the safety of Rāma and safe return of Sītā to the bosom of Rāma. I have witnessed these scenes myself and I am glad that I have not noticed any theme where Rāma's dignity as a great man was ever lowered or slightly tarnished. That he is a benevolent ruler, a devout Hindu leader, a brave as well as kind hearted man, a pious man with a sense of respect for other religion, could be well appreciated and the Muslim youths have carefully maintained the immaculate character of Rāma above everything.

The theme of the *Rāmāyaṇa* entered the arena of the folk-tradition of eastern India for centuries with all its colourfulness through oral and written sources. The folks, both Muslims and Hindus in Bangladesh, have retained these themes as well as added new stories to them, created new ideas, re-shaped the old ones and through this process, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, in the folk tradition, has come closer and closer to the life and culture of the simple people. They have accepted the *Rāmāyaṇa* with deepest love and admiration and remodelled the themes, as and when necessary, in accordance with their own patterns as values of life. Here lies the creative geneius of the unsophisticated village people of Bangladesh.

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Tagore and the Ramayana

Ujjal Kumar Majumdar

Rabindranath Tagore in his Reminiscences tried to recall the names of books with which he stepped into maturity and his memory went back to the very early days of reading. The one is a Bengali translation of the Chāṇakya śloka, and the other is the Rāmāyaṇa by Kṛttivāsa. Tagore could clearly remember one cloudy afternoon when his nephew Satya Prasad teased him by calling a policeman who was nowhere near him. Rabindranath got very much frightened and ran to his mother for help. But seeing her unperturbed he found himself in a fix, took an old edition of Kṛttivāsa's Rāmāyaṇa with a marble paper cover, and began to read it sitting on the door-step of his mother's room. As it was afternoon, the square portico before him seemed gloomy in the pale light of the monsoon sun. The child poet was very soon absorbed in some of the sad parting scenes of Kṛttivāsa. Tears soon stained his face, and his mother's aunt snatched the book away from him.

Of course this was no time for mature appreciation. But the image of the boundery line drawn around Sītā's cottage when the couple was in exile left a very deep impress of fear-psychosis in his mind and that was why he behaved well with his guardian-cum-servant Shyam when he was engaged in household work. Another caretaker, Iswar, a bit ascetic type, used to read out the Rāmāyaṇa usually in the evening under the broken shades of an oil lamp. The poet could clearly remember the story of Laba and Kuśa giving a gallant fight against their father and uncle. He fully enjoyed the bravery described in sweet and warbling 'payāra' by Kṛttivāsa, but this charming effect was very soon smashed by the alliterative

splendour of the Pānchāli by Dāśarathi Roy which Kiśorī Chatterjee, an assistant of his father, read out to finish the incident.

Tagore then went to recall the names of various books he had read with the help of his father, Devendranath, one of which was Ṛju Pāṭha part II, a selection from Sanskrit texts by Iswar Candra Vidyāsāgar. One of its pieces was from Vālmīki titled *Kaikeyi Daśaratha-Sambāda,* and that was his first acquaintance with the original Vāmīki Rāmāyaṇa.

But as Tagore grew up with all his creative activities, the two epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, with all their scholarly deliberations and interpretations left a deep impression on him. But to our surprise, Tagore used the stories of the Mahābhārata much more than those of the Rāmāyaṇa. Not too much surprising, of course, as the Mahābhārata is a bigger store-house of subplots full of dramatic possibilities than the Rāmāyaṇa. All the fine poetic dramas like Chitrāngadā, Karṇa-Knṅtī-Saṃbāda, Gāndhārīr Abedan, Vidāya-Abhiśap were based on the stories of the Mahābhārata. On the other hand, no such dramas were written on the basis of the Rāmāyaṇa excepting a few finely written poems of lyrical splendour like Ahalyār Prati, Bhāṣā O Chanda, Patitā etc. But it must be noted in this connection that the poet used some incidents from the Rāmāyaṇa as symbols like those of 'Ahalyā' and 'Māyāmṛiga' in his poems 'Ahalyār Prati' and 'Nagar Saṅgīt' respectively, and in two dance dramas, 'Vālmīki-Pratibhā' and 'Kālmṛ-gayā,' though later, many of his songs of 'Kālmṛgayā' were. incorporated into the second edition of Vālmīki Pratibhā. Kālmṛgayā was never published again.

But in Tagore's critical writings the Rāmāyaṇa covers a larger space than the Māhābhārata as is evident in his two critical essays—Sāhitya Sṛiṣṭi (Baṅgadarśan, 1314 B. E. Asar.) and Bhāratbarṣer Itihāser Dhārā (Prabāsē, 1319 B. E, Baiśakh). In these two articles Tagore traced the socio-economic history of India and deftly established the truth

that it was the Rāmāyaṇa which was much more intimately connected with the Indian people than the Mahābhārata of epic grandeur. From the view point of our later sociological or familial bonds, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā commanded more respect than Draupadī and her five husbands, as a woman having more than one husband represented a tribal trait not in vogue in Aryan societies. To Tagore the Mahābhārata may hold the sociological order of Indian life and the progress of Indian mind more truly than the Rāmāyaṇa, but the Rāmāyaṇa with its closely-knit story and poetic excellence brings out a pleasure which is intensely human and intrinsically moral. Our respect to the superiors, our fraternal and conjugal love and our tremendous power of suffering unimaginable hardship—all these aspects of social and moral life find their finest form in the story of Rāma. The characters of the Mahābhārata could not find their places in our hearts so simply and directly even if they were richer with dramatic possibilities.

When Tagore was thinking about the true spirit of 'biography' of a literature, particularly the biography of a poet, it occurred to him that the myth which grew around the life of Vālmīki was more realistic in nature than the common bio-details of Vālmīki (See the article 'Kavi-Jībanī', 1308, B. E. included in his collection 'Sāhitya') in the sense that Vālmīki, endowed with a deep pity on seeing *crounchi's* (a species of the heron or the curlew, lament for *crouncha* (the female bard lament for the male-bird) poured out his heart to describe the story of Rāma, and the lament of the *crounchī* kept ringing in his ear only to be transformed into his classic creation of Rāma-Kathā. Like the killer of *crouncha*, Rāvaṇa, too seperated the ideal couple, Rāma and Sītā, and in Rāvaṇa's death one can hear the flapping of the dying *crouncha*. What Rāvaṇa did was more than death to Rāma, as separation could not be avoided even after the reunion of Rāma and Sītā. Acceptable or not, this explanation indicates that Tagore took the story of Rāmāyaṇa as an extended symbolical suggestion of the tragic story of the *crouncha*-couple. To him, the overwhelming compassion of Vālmīki roused the poet in him

to relate the story of untimely separation of Rāma and Sītā. Again, in an article named 'Sāhitya Sṛṣṭi' (1314 B. E.), mentioned earlier, he held up Rāma as the symbol of all the restraints of our Hindu society, of the necessary sacrifice, forbearance, tolerance and rigorous discipline of our culture. For this reason Tagore has followed Vālmīki almost to the letters to idealize Rāma as the perfect human hero. In the Rāmāyaṇa we see Vālmīki asking Nārada whether he has met any ideal character, a matchless personality from all ethical stand point :

চারিত্রেণ চ কো যুক্তঃ সর্বভূতেষু কো হিতঃ ।
বিদ্বান্ কঃ কঃ সমর্থশ্চ কশ্চৈবা প্রিয়দর্শনঃ ॥
আত্মবান্ কো জিতক্রোধো দ্যুতিমান্ কোঽনসূয়কঃ ।
কস্য বিভেতি দেবাশ্চ জাতরোষস্য সংযুগে ॥

(Ādi Kāṇḍa, 110-4)

Following the queries of Vālmīki, Tagore, in his famous poem 'Bhāṣā O Chanda', puts queries in Vālmīki's mouth in the same tone :

কহ মোরে বীর্য কার ক্ষমারে করে না অতিক্রম,
কাহার চরিত্র ঘেরি সুকঠিন ধর্মের নিয়ম
ধরেছে সুন্দর কান্তি মাণিক্যের অঙ্গদের মতো,
মহৈশ্বর্যে আছে নম্র, মহাদৈন্যে কে হয়নি নত...

Tr. Tell me whose powers does not trample forgiveness ; Around whose character the undying laws of righteousness shine like ornaments ? Who is humble inspite of wealth and who has not bent low assailed by poverty ?

So we see that the Rāmāyaṇa has served Tagore first with a clue of the urge of a poet, and then, with a story of full of hardships and miseries, and lastly, an ideal character who becomes 'King' or 'Rājā' contributing qualities in the making of a typical Tegorean hero evinced in his so many symbolic diamas and songs. Even a glimpse of 'the king' depicted in 'Bhāṣā O Chanda' can be had if one goes through the play

'King of the Dark Chamber' (*Rājā*), visualising the features of his ideal Husband king. The Kṣatriya king Rāma who accepted the low caste Guhaka as his friend, who stretched his loving hands towards his malicious subjects and extended his whole-hearted support for their good cause and thus spiritedly mobilised the social forces, has been transformed into the ruler-hero of his symbolic dramas who came out of the curtain to meet the subjects and head them. Actually, Tagore wanted to see Rāma the protector in the character of the curtain-bound king of 'Red Oleanders' (*Raktakaravī*).

Tagore has taken some characters from the Rāmāyaṇa as a symbol of self-exploration of life. In the poem 'Patitā' we see the mendicant Riṣyasṛnga allured in a very luscious background,. But Riṣyasṛnga has been used as an instrument to rouse the divinity in the prostitute. And after her awakening, the remaining portion of the poem is devoted wholly to catch the mood of complete self-dedication of a charmed adolescent girl and not a professional prostitute. Here the prostitute has become the symbol of the awakening of the inner life - the essential spirit of our material existence. The same symbolical suggestion is found in 'Ahalyār Prati', a famous poem included in the collection '*Mānasī*. Ahalayā, wife of the sage Gautama, has become a symbol of the emergence of the green vegetation from the ancient stoney earth, of animation in an inanimate world. She has been described by the poet as a naked beauty of a full fledged youthful daughter of the mother-earth. Again in a song, the poet symbolises Ahalyā's craving for the magic touch of light over darkness, for the power of breathing hard stones into soft earth, for a sharp shower upon arid land, for the brushing of flower petals covering the avid naked mother-earth.

It is clear from Ahalyā's craving that she waits for the magic touch of light, of softness, of a shower of a creative urge to burst herself into beauty and that touch of fulfilment is none but Rāma, the source of all creative activities.

In another poem 'Kuhudhwani' (1888) included in '*Manasi*' the poet recaptures the music of the nature and makes it a

symbol of all the past sufferings of mankind and recalls the abandoned Sītā in the hermitage of Vālmīki gazing at her sons Kuśa and Lava, and feeling glad and sad at the same time ; glad, because she had her sons playing near at hand, and sad, because she thought of her most unfortunate life and of her unfortunate sons who had been forsaken by their father, the king. Sitā's feelings got the required compassion or Karuṇā from the cuckoo's dulcet note, and here again, Tagore pointed out that the compassion which nature showers upon helpless Sītā is the same one which inspired Vālmīki to write epic. Tagore identifies the nature—music with the ever flowing compassion in human heart, and nature and art seem to be interwoven with compassionate music. Thus by a blend of harmony and the deep power of joy we are able to see into the life of things. The suffering of Sītā or the shy love-making of Śakuntalā and Dushyanta in a bower is enriched by the music of the spheres around it to make it a total experience of life's joys and sufferings, and here again the sufferings of Sītā symbolise human suffering in general.

The story of the Rāmāyaṇa continued to attract him after the *Mānasī* period (1880) and in a poem titled *Puraṣkār* written in 1883 and included in *Sonar Tari* the poet has chosen three chapters from the Rāmāyaṇa ; first, the day on which Rāma leaving his throne, went away to the forest with Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā ; secondly, the day on which Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa came to the cottage to see that Sitā was not there ; and thirdly, the day on which Sītā took refuge in the yawning earth. And again, bringing these three painful incidents together, Tagore strikes a deep note of estrangement in the noble heart of Rāma. Tagore has selected these incidents purposefully to symbolise the basic crisis of human life in his art form. In another poem titled *Bane O Rājye,* written in 1896 and included in *Caitali* the poet again takes up one of the painful moods from the life of Rāma, when after Sītā's departure to the hermitage of Vālmīki, he used to come back to his bed-room after discharging all the kingly duties to find

one portion of his bed empty. The fact that he was much more happy with Sītā when he was exiled to the forest to lead a simple life, disturbed him very much. Now with all his wealth and power he was sad as he had only the golden image of Sītā with him, not the real one. Sītā, the symbol of happiness, had gone into exile while the golden image of her seemed painfully hollow to Rāma. The symbol of Sītā which stands for eternal happiness can be extended to the effect that she stands for independence, the longing for which was so natural in the then cultural and political atmosphere (in the late nineteenth century), and for the 'great age' of ancient India where we had our full vivacity and without which we are just as sad as Rāma. The same day Tagore wrote another sonnet titled 'Sabhyatār prati' which has not only become famous for his 'back-to-nature' attitude but also for his loud cry for independence : Less "পাষাণ পিঞ্জরে তব, নাহি চাহি নিরাপদে রাজভোগ নব, চাই স্বাধীনতা।" (In your stony prison, I do not crave for few dainty dishes, I want independence.) Therefore, it is evident that the pangs of Rāma without Sītā stand for the Indian people craving for independence.

In his later life when Tagore wrote the symbolic drama titled 'Red Oleander' (*Raktakaravī*)—(1926) he recalled what he had said while interpretating the Rāmāyaṇa in his essay on the traditions of Indian history (Bhāratbarṣer Itihāser Dhārā) published in 'Prabāsi' a monthly magazine, twelve years ago. That the agricultural life was being destroyed by the terrible impact of industrialisation had been told allegorically in the story of the golden dear alluring Sītā who represented the agricultural life. Similarly, in 'Red Oleander' Yakṣapurī started crushing the human spirit till the King came out of the iron curtain to see his own machinery working against him. Thus the whole carefully built superstructure of industrialisation, represented by Rāvaṇa and Vibhīṣaṇa in one body crumbled down by crushing others and itself.

But the symbol of the golden dear does not always stand for perilous illusion or temptation in Tagore's creative world.

In an earlier play, *Rāja* ('The King of the Dark Chamber') written in 1910, an eccentric person comes out in the street to sing a song starting with the following line—"তোরা যে যা বলিস ভাই আমার সোনার হরিণ চাই" (What ever you may say I want the golden dear). Here the golden dear stands for attaining the unattainable, for complete freedom to run after the ever illusive life, life the great enchanter. The mystery of life lies in chasing it. Sometimes the chasing leads to destruction, sometimes it leads to an aesthetic joy of life, a fascinating figure in the hands of death. The chase after the Holy Grail has its own reward.

Unlike the Mahābhārata with all its clear-cut characters full of pulsating human drama, the Rāmāyaṇa stands for life with all its sweet suggestions of yearnings and sorrows, illusions and fascinations. To Tagore the Mahābhārata depicts life as a human drama with currents and cross-currents and the Rāmāyaṇa life as the great enchantment of colourful symbols of values.

The Ramayana punthi found in Tripura

Arun Kumar Mukhopadhyay

Higher learning and research in Bengali language received a tremendous fillip in the middle ages in north-eastern India, especially in Cooch Behar, Tripura, Manipur, Cachar through the patronage of the native princes. A special enthusiasm was noticed in the field of writing mythological epics : this was an evidence of the influence exercised by the Aryan culture on the non-Aryan. In medieval kingdoms of Tripura, Cachar, Manipur and Kamta Bengali prose was regularly used in the royal administration, and this wide use of Bengali created a favourable atmosphere for the growth of Bengali literature.

The history of the Tripura dynasty was written in the versical narration in Bengali called *Rājmāla*. Written during the reign of Maharaja Birchandramāṇikya, *Rājmālā* contains numerous anecdotes in verse about the royal family of Tripura. This epical narration reveals that the Tripura princes positively encouraged the composition of Bengali poetry.

According to *Rājmālā*, Dhanyamāṇikya, one of the note-worthey princes of Tripura, did not speak Bengali but he arranged for the translation into Bengali such pieces as *Utkal-khanḍa Panchāli*, *Jatraratnakaranidhi* and *Pretchaturdashi*. These have not yet been traced. Evidence suggests that the oldest poetry which was translated into Bengali at the instance of Maharaja Govindamāṇikya (1659, 1667-1676) was *Brihan-nārad Purāṇa*. It was recored into Bengali by Siddhanta Saraswati. The editor of *Rājmālā* has attested that the only *punthi* of this poetry was destroyed in a fire in the ministers' quarters but it was printed by Chandrodaya Vidyabinod at

the instance of Maharaja Rādhākishoremāṇikya. Printed copies of it are stil available in Tripura. The library of the Asiatic Society at Calcutta possesses a fairly older copy of this *punthi*.

So far as could be ascertained, the *punthis* found in Tripura were collected at time of composing *Rājmālā* at the instance of Maharaja Birchandramāṇikya. This collection of *punthis*, known as 'Rājamālā collection', was preserved in the library of Maharaja Bir Bikrammanikya College at Agartala. Most of these *punthis* have since been transferred to the Tripura Government Museum which was set up about ten years ago, and the rest were destroyed in course of time.

These *punthis* of Tripura, now preserved in the Government Museum, are on various topics : collection of Vaishnaba padars titled *Padakalpataru*, dramas and treatises on *Rasa* written by the Vaishnab Goswamis in Sanskrit and their Bengali translation, life story of Sri Caitanya, various Sanskrit *puranas* and *tantras*, *Gīta Govinda*, *Adbhut Rāmāyaṇa* and *Vālmīki Rāmāyana*, *Kriyājogasāra* of *Pathapurana*, *Mahābhārata* by Sanjay, *Rāmāyaṇa* by Kṛttivasa and three historical epics (*Champak Vijay*, *Kṛiṣnamālā*, *Tripura Burattari*), and poetry on astronomy.

The Government Museum possesses ten *punthis* on *Rāmāyaṇa* three Sanskrit *punthis* written in Bengali script and seven Bengali Rāmāyaṇa *punthis*. Two Sanskrit *punthis*, viz. *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* and *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* are written on *tulat* or country made paper.

There are about one hundred *punthis* in Tripura Government Museum, but so far only one-third has been catalogued. The rest have been preserved without any numbering and cataloguing. The seven Rāmāyaṇa *punthis* in Bengali are numbered as M 21A, M 21C, M 23, M 60, M 67, M 92 and one has no accession number. Of these seven *punthis*, six are incomplete *punthis* on *Rāmāyaṇa* by Kṛttivāsa, and one is on *Laṅkā kāṇḍa* of Rāmāyaṇa. From the points of view of language, script and age, these *punthis* of Tripura reveal many new facts.

One can have an introduction to these *punthis* preserved in the Government Museum in the 'Descriptive Catalogue of the Tripura *punthis*', published in September, 1977, by the Education Directorate, Government of Tripura ; the second volume has not yet come out. The published catalogue containes description, sometimes wrong, of only one-third of the *punthis* preserved in the Government Museum. The *Rāmāyaṇa punthis* in Bengali were composed or written during the reigns of Maharaja Durgāmāṇikya (1890-13), Maharaja Rājdharmāṇikya II and Rāmagangāmāṇikya. These *punthis* belong to the period from 1790 A.D. to 1810 A.D.

Let us now have a detailed description of the Rāmāyaṇa *punthis* in Bengali. The Museum has three Sanskrit *punthis* on Rāmāyaṇa written in Bengali scripts.

(A) The first *punthi* is on *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* written during the reign of Maharaja Rāmagangāmāṇikya. The date has been given as 1740 śaka. The editor, Śibes Dwija, writes at the close of the *punthi* :

শাকে শূন্যচতুস্তরঙ্গধরণীমানেন ভূত্যস্তঙ্গে সংসারার্ণবতারকং
ভবাভিদ্দানমধ্যাত্মরামায়ণং । মাণিক্যেনাবিভূষিতস্য নৃপতেঃ
শ্রীরামগঙ্গায়াস্যার্থে পুস্তকমাণিলেখস্তভদং শ্রোতদিশবেশদ্বিজঃ ॥

(B) The second *punthi* on *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*, which is annotated and deals with *Uttar kāṇḍa* only, runs through twelve pages and has been subtitled as শ্রীরামগীতানাম্পঞ্চমোহধ্যায়ঃ । The editor writes :

ওঁ নমো রামচন্দ্রায় ॥১॥
তবোজগহনমঙ্গলাত্মনা বিধায়রামায়ণযশকীর্তিমুত্তমা চর্চারপূর্ব্বাপরি
জ্জরঘুতমো রাজর্ষিবর্ষ্টৈরপিজ্জেবিজ্জযথা ॥২॥

At the end there is the signature of the copy as—

ইতি শ্রীযুত মহীধরকৃতা শ্রীরামগীতাব্যাখ্যা সমাপ্তা ॥

(C) The *punthi* on *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* has been completed in four *kāṇḍas* : Adi, Ayodhyā, Kiṣkindhyā, Araṇya.

The Bengali *punthis* on *Rāmāyaṇa* number seven.

1. 88 pages incomplete *punthi* (M. 21A) ;

2. 400 pages illustrated *Rāmāyaṇa* by Kṛttivāsa (M. 67) ;

3. 50 pages incomplete *Rāmāyaṇa* punthi containing *Laṅkā kāṇḍa* and the account of the killing of Bīrbāhu (M. 92) ; it is preserved along with the *punthi* of *Prembhaktitaranginī*.

The details of four other *Rāmāyaṇa punthis* in Bengali are as follows :

4. Incomplete *punthi* on Rāmāyaṇa by Kṛttivāsa, which contains the story of *Laṅkā kāṇḍa* : the copyist of this *punthi* was Haragobinda Das ; the date given at the end is 1st Paus 1222 B. S., December 1816 A.D.

5. The 575 pages large *punthi* on Rāmāyaṇa by Kṛttivāsa ;

6. The 450 pages uncatalogued *punthi* which is a copy of Kṛttivāsa's *Rāmāyaṇa* by Sree Gouram Das of Sakim Pargana Kadba Jaynagar. His patron was Ramdev Thakur of Sakim Daniswar. This *punthi* is dated 27th Paus 1216 B. S., 1731 Sakabda, i.e. 1809 A.D. This *Rāmāyaṇa* has seven kāṇḍas, but the pages of *Aranya* kāṇḍa are missing. The page numbers of the other six kāṇḍas are as follows :

Adi kāṇḍa	64 pp.
Ayodhyā kāṇḍa	27 pp.
Sundar kāṇḍa	40 pp.
Aranya kāṇḍa	x
Kiskindhyā kāṇḍa	30 pp.
Laṅkā kāṇḍa	187 pp.
Uttara kāṇḍa	102 pp.
	450 pp.

The use of the two early Middle Bengali words তোহ্মে আহ্মা in this *punthi* deserves special notice. The relevant *śloka* runs thus :

তোহ্মা রূপ দেখিয়া পর্ব্বতে দিপ্তি করে ।
ভয়ঙ্কর বনে মহাসিংহ ব্যাঘ্র বৈসে ॥

7. The attention of the readers is especially invited to the last, i.e. the seventh *punthi* (M 23) on Rāmāyaṇa. The Descriptive Catalogue of Punthis, published by the Government of Tripura, has wrongly given its author as 'anonymous'. The poet is Bhabaninath whose name has been referred in various pages ; for example—

a. পণ্ডিত ভবানীনাথ শ্রীরাম বন্দিয়া ।
করিলেন পদবন্ধ সুসার করিয়া ॥
ইতি শ্রীরামচন্দ্রাভিষেকে শ্রীলক্ষ্মণদিগ্বিজয় সমাপ্ত ॥ (৫২।১)

b. পণ্ডিত ভবানিনাথ রামচন্দ্র বন্দে ।
করিল লাচাড়ি কিছা পয়ার প্রবন্ধে ।। (৫৫।২)

The first *śloka* gives the title of this *Kāvya* as রামচন্দ্রাভিষেকে লক্ষ্মণদিগ্বিজয় ।

In two places the title has been given as শ্রীরামচন্দ্রাভিষেকে শ্রীশত্রুঘনদিগ্বিজয় । This size of this *punthi* is 48 × 17.5 cm. and the total number of pages is 91, each page containing 28 (14 + 14) lines, and each line containing 47 to 69 words. This *punthi,* which has been recovered intact, is dated 15th Kartick 1228 Tripurabda, i.e. 1815 A.D. It seems that this *punthi* was composed towards the end of the 18th century.

That this *punthi* is written in the dialect of Comilla—Sylhet is established through an examination of both phonology and morphology of its language.

Up till now this *Rāmāyaṇa* and its author, poet Bhabaninath, have gone unmentioned in the history of Bengali literature. The discovery of this poet and his work would certainly be regarded important. Because of its distance from the seats of old culture in Nabadwip-Krishnanagar-Bhattapalli and that of new culture in Srirampore-Chinsurah-Calcutta, this *Rāmāyaṇa punthi* escaped the attention of the Missionaries and later researchers.

The script of this *punthi* available at present in Tripura is not the original one, it is a copy of the original. The last

but one line of this *Kāvya* reads : 'জথাদৃষ্টতথা লিখিতং লিখক' and the last line gives the date as : ইতি সন ১২৮৮ ত্রিপুরাব্দরি তারিখ ১৫ কার্ত্তিক।'

This shows that the original *Kāvya* was composed sometime before the time of its being copied. One can therefore conclude that this *Rāmāyaṇa Kāvya* was composed towards the end of the 18th century. Poet Bhabaninath has repeatedly said—

শ্রীরামের ইতিহাস সোনিলে পাতক নাশ
ভবসিন্দোপাঙ্গ হৈবা পার ।। (২৪।২)

Let us have some specimens of poet's power of description and imagination. Three short quotations are given here ;

i. জেই জনে শোনে রাম ইতিহাস কথা ।
সর্ব্বপাপবিনাশিয়া গাহে হরি কথা ॥
অপুত্রকে পুত্র হয়ে নির্ধনের ধন ।
মহারুগ খণ্ডয়ে শোনিলে রামায়ণ ॥
এইসব পুথি জেবা লিখিয়া রাখয়ে ।
আয়ো জশ ধনবৃদ্ধি তাহার জে হয়ে ॥

ii. বোলেন ভবানীনাথ বন্দি রঘোনাথ।
পদবন্দে লাচাডি করিয়া সহস্রাত ॥

॥ লাচাড়ি ॥

রাম বোলে প্রাণ ভাই বালিয়ে তুমার ঠাই
কহ সহে সীতার তিরস্কার ॥
এমত কুলটা যার না দেখিছি সংসার
রাত্রি মধ্যে চাহে পারিজাত ॥

iii. মহাক্রোধে শাজিয়া আসিল কুশপাল ।
শ্রীরামসিংহ নাদে লুক চমৎকার ॥
রাজায় প্রধান পুত্র শেজে জোবরাজ ।
বানে অন্ধকার কৈল নৃপাতি সমাজ ॥
বজ্রবাণ এড়িলেন শব্দ ঠনঠনি ।

শোল হস্তে মহাকূপে জোজে রঘোমণি ॥
সম্মোহ বায়ব অস্ত্র এড়ে রঘোমণি ।
চক্রবানে কুশাসনে কাটিলেন পুনি ॥
হইবেক সংগ্রামে পৃথিবী জাহে তল ।
বাণ শব্দে সর্ব্ব সন্য হৈল টলমল ॥

These quotations would amply prove that Bhabaninath was a powerful poet.

It appears from an examination of the phonology and morphology of the language of this *Kāvya* that the poet hailed from Comilla-Sylhet area of Bangladesh. This is established by his using O-sound in place of U-sound and vice versa ; for example : শোল (শূল), রুগ (রোগ), কূপ (কোপ), লুক (লোক), মর (মোর), তুমার (তোমার), গোরু (গুরু), আয়ো (আয়ু), চিত্রগোপ্ত (চিত্রগুপ্ত), কুন (কোন), বিষ্ণো (বিষ্ণু), লুভ (লোভ), মুহ (মোহ), গোন (গুণ), সরুবর (সরোবর) । The mss. seem to be two hundred years old, and the mode of scripts and peculiarities of language of these 'punthis' may be claimed to be of the same time. This claim may be proved by analysis of the phonology, morphology and syntax of the language used in those mss. of country-made paper. But as space is very limited we are compelled to refrain from any detailed linguistic study.

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Sundarkanda of Chanda Jha and Lal Das

Devendra Jha

Since times immemorial the stories of Rāma has had a place of prestige both in the life of the masses and in literature, and in such values and relationships as manliness, brotherhood, son's devotion to father, friendship, truthfulness, wife's devotion to husband and dutifulness, the character of Rāma has had pervasive impact. The first exercise in poetic composition began with Ramā kāvya and that is why Vālmīki is known as Ādikāvi and his *magnum opus* the Rāmāyana has been regarded as Ādikāvya. The Rāmāyana of Vālmīki is the oldest literary creation enshrining the story of Rāma. From this it is evident that even before the creation of this great work there must have been an oral tradition of the recitation of the story and we find a reference to this tradition in the Vālakāṇḍa of Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa. But it is very difficult to say since when and how long this oral tradition existed, because even in the Vedās there are references to some of the leading characters like Rāma, Daśaratha, Janaka and Sītā around whom the story of Rāma gradually developed into and took an epic form.

Among the ancient Indian literary creations the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* are the highest achievements. The eighteen Purāṇas and the Upa-purānas come only after them. In this way the story of Rāma came to acquire such pervasive and wide spread popularity that it started taking the shape of poetic creation in different Indian languages: such as Kamban Rāmāyaṇa in Tamil, Dwipad Rāmāyaṇa and Bhaskar Rāmāyaṇa in Telegu, Pump Rāmāyaṇa in Kannar, Rāmacarit in Malayalam, Kṛttivāsi Rāmāyaṇa in Bengali,

Balaramdas's Rāmāyaṇa in Oriya, Rāmacaritamānas in Hindi and Mithila Bhāṣa Rāmāyaṇa by Chanda Jha and Rāmeshwar Carit Rāmāyaṇa by Lal Das, both in Maithili. Naturally, it is only the character of the *Maryādā Puruṣottama* Rāma that has become the ideal medium of the attainment of Puruṣārtha catuṣṭaya namely, Dharma, Artha, Kāma, Mokṣa And it is this concern for man's upliftment to higher goals that has been the mainspring behind the creation of the Rāmāyaṇas in various languages.

Maithili language and literature has the privilege of having two Rāmāyaṇas. Kavishwar Chanda Jha wrote Mithila Bhāṣa Rāmāyaṇa and Lal Das Rāmeshwar Carit Mithila Rāmāyaṇa. Just as in Hindi literature Sur and Tulsi have been paired together by such an evolution as Sūr sūr, Talsī Sasī. Similarly in Maithili literature, if we assign Vidyapati the place and significance of the sun, then there can be no objection if Chanda Jha is assigned the second best place, that is the quiet and soothing dignity of the moon. The poetic stream that originated from the genius of Vidyapati established the tradition of Kṛṣṇakāvya in Maithili, and Chand Jha was the first poet in Maithili who by composing the first epic in Maithili centering around the story of Rāma established a different poetic tradition known as Rāma kāvya.

Sītā, the divine consort of the maryādā puruṣottama coming down the ages in the mighty tradition of Rāma kāvya takes a new form. Sītā came to be regarded as a symbol of regeneration in Maithili, among the Maithils and that was why Lal Das selected the title of Rāmaswar-carit for his Rāmāyaṇa.

In this paper an attempt has been made to present a comparative study of the Sundarkāṇḍa of the the respective Rāmāyaṇas by Chanda Jha and Lal Das.

The main basis of Chanda Jha's Rāmāyaṇa is the 'Adhyātmya Rāmāyaṇa' and that of Lal Das's Rāmāyaṇa is the 'Vālmīkīya Rāmāyaṇa' and to some extent, also 'Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa' or 'Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa'. In Chanda Jha's Rāmā-

yaṇa it is the character of Rāma which is pre-eminent and Sītā, the incarnation of Śakti (goddess) follow in his foot steps like shadow, in other words, in the figure of Rāma it is 'Bṛahmā' which is incarnate and Sītā, the embodiment of Śakti is enlivened by and follows in all ways that Bṛahmā incarnate. In Lal Das while accepting Rāma as the embodiment of Bṛahmā, Sītā has been given the inportance of an independent and original creating power. Sītā is the original uncreated energy or Śakti incarnate and Rāma gains in creative power and force being inspired by Sītā. It is clear from the very title of Lal Das's Rāmāyaṇa (Rāmeshwar Carita) that Sītā is for him more important than Rāma because he sees in Sıtā the incarnation of Rāma or Śakti

Sītā yadapi Rāma awatāra
Kayala īho vipatika Svikāra.

(Though Sītā is the incarnation of Lakṣmī, she accepted this calamity as well.)

Where as, in Chanda Jha it is Rāma who is pre-eminant. The first line in the Sundarkāṇḍa of Chanda Jha's Rāmāyaṇa is :

Jaya jaya Rāma navala ghanashyāma
sakalaloka lochana abhirāma.

(Victory be for Rāma who is dark-complexioned like a new cloud and whose appearance is soothing to the eyes of all.)

But the Sundarkāṇḍa of Lal Das's Rāmāyaṇa opens thus :

Rāmaka manaraha janika adhīna
Sakala Jagata Jamikā me tīna.
Jamika prabhā dekhi chandra harasa
se Sītā purathu mora āsa.

(Let that Sītā fulfil my hopes under whose control is the mind of Rāma, who is the ultimate repose for the whole universe and before whose brilliance the moon fades out.)

Whereas Chanda Jha invokes Rāma, Lal Das worships Sītā to fulfil and bless him. Not only this, in Lal Das the worship of Sītā becomes prior to the worship of Rāma.

sirajathi pālathi karathi Vināsha.
Sabha me bhāsaya Janika prakāsha
Chhāyā iva-raha Rāmaka Sanga
Karather hamara Sītā agha bhanga.
Chanchala Kuntala Kuṇḍala lola,
Shobhita Sundara yugala Kapola.
Sītāmana kinathi bina mola
Se Raghupati hridi basathu alola.

(Let that Sīta destroy all my sins who creates, rears and destorys [the whole universe] and whose insture is reflected in all the beings, and who is always with Rāma like his shadow.)

Chanda Jha invokes Hanumāna in Mangal Śloka at the beginning of Sundarkāṇḍa of his Rāmāyaṇa.

Jhutanaga dambarge paramotsave
Chakita bhanugane jita-manmathe.
janakjadhi Vinashi manogatau,
pranatirastu hanumati marutau.

On the other hand, Lal Das writes thus :—

tirṇarnaveṇa gadita pavanatmajena
vriddhim nishamya dayitasya chirena ramya.
dutasya śakti mavalokya nanada bhuyas
sā janakı mama manoratha siddhidadastu.

In Chanda Jha's Rāmāyaṇa, the kāṇḍas are divided into chapters where as there is no such chapter division in Lal Das's Rāmāyaṇa. Rasa and Alankara are not so important in Chanda Jha's Rāmāyaṇa as they are in Lal Das. Chanda Jha's Rāmāyaṇa is the treasure-house of rhetorics and proverbs but it is not so in Lal Das. In Chanda Jha, Bhakti dominates Rasa in presenting the history of Rāmakathā. Being inspired by Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, Lal Das has given free play to Rasa in describing the same history. When Hanumāna takes on the minuscular form to search for Sītā in the palace of Rāvaṇa. Śṛingāra Rasa reaches its climax of poetic expression in the description of amorous scenes there :

Nila nira iva Rāvaṇa anga.
Shobha amita kamalanani sanga.
Rāvaṇa tana matanga samana.
Karini gana sama bhamini bhana.
Purva yuvayuta samahika anga
Sundarata rati chhavi kara bhanga.
mada-vihvali kamatura klanta.
nirbhari sutali surute shranta.
kakarahu Rāvaṇa hridaya lagaya.
sutala karahu janu dabaya.
prista-parshva-dishi-dishi kata nari.
sutali chhali kucha jangha ughari.
katijani Rāvaṇa mukha mukha meli.
sutaliha kata jani karitahi keli.

[The limbs of Rāvaṇa were like blue water. He looked handsome among the beautiful damsels. The body of Rāvaṇa was like a mad elephant. The ladies there defeated Rati, the wife of Cupid. The ladies appeared to be mad with intoxication, fully under the grip of Cupid, tired. They were extremely tired on account of sextual enjoyment and so they fell asleep. Some of them were empraced by Rāvaṇa, some were pressed by him under his thighs. Many were clung by his sides and back. They were sleeping with there breasts and thighs naked. Many (ladies) were pouring their lips upon his and many had slept while enjoying.]

Chanda Jha has disposed of the whole scene in just two lines :

Sītā takayita tataya Daśānana-mandira gela.
dekhi vibhava-vinyasa bahuta mana Vismita bhela.

[He entered into the house of Rāvaṇa in search of Sītā and was very much amazed to see his glory and wealth.]

In Lal Das we have a very fine psychological analysis of Dharma and Adharma, Pāp and Puṇya, differentiations going on in Hanumān's heart in the afore said scene, where as, there is nothing like this in Chanda Jha's Rāmāyaṇa.

Birahini Sītā as depicted in Sundarkāṇḍa of both the Rāmāyaṇa has her separate indentities. As for example we find her described thus in Chanda Jha :

Ha Raghunatha anatha jakan
dasakanḍa puri hama ayala chhi.
Simhaka trasa mahavana me
harinika samana darayala Chhi.
Chandra-chakori ahainka sada hama.
śloka samudra samaili Chhi.
devara dosha Kahu hama ki,
apana aparadha saun kaili Chhi.

[Alas ! O Rāma, I have come to the town of Rāma like a wretched fellow. I am terrified like a deer in the forest infested by lions. I am like Chakora to you who is like the moon ; but am submerjed in the ocean of anxiety. What blemishes should I throw on your brother as I am myself to be blamed.]

Lastly this śloka

Sundare sundari Sītā
Sundare sundari katha.
Sundare sundaram Rāmam
Sundare kinna Sundaram.

In the Sundarkāṇḍa, we find the beautiful Sītā, the beautiful story and the most beautiful (of all the things) Rāma himself. What is there in the Sundarkāṇḍa which is not beautiful !

———

The Ramayana in Nepali Literature

Gour Mohan Roy

The Rāmāyaṇa is one of the great four epics of the world. It came into existence about three thousand years ago. Since then the epic has been exercising remarkable influence on the cultural growth and development of India. Moreover, the Rāmāyaṇa has been translated into major world-languages, and different branches of culture of South East Asia have been coloured by the theme and ideals of the Rāmāyaṇa. The Chinese transformation of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa episode was discovered and introduced to the people by Professor Sylva in Levy in 1903. This was proved to be composed in 472 A.D. The structure of the story seems to be similar to that of 'Daśaratha Jātaka' of Buddhist literature, and the Tibetan transformation of the same was discovered by Dr F. W. Thomas in Turkistan. It has been known that the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata were recited regularly in one of the temples of Cambodia in the sixth century A.D. A few portions of the story of the Rāmāyaṇa have been found on the temples of 'Ankorvāt' in the form of sculptural superscription. The most famous Jāvānese Rāmāyaṇa is entitled "*Kakawin*" which was written by Yogishwara in the ninth century. The work consists of 26 sargas and 2774 ślokas.

The influences of Vālmīki and his Rāmāyaṇa can be traced out in the Sanskrit literary works like 'Rāguvangśam' 'Bhaṭṭikāvyam', 'Uttar Rāma Caritam', 'Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa etc. Kamban Rāmāyaṇa was written in Tamil by Kamban in the eleventh century. Telugu Dwipada Rāmāyaṇa was written in twelfth century and the famous 'Rāmacaritmānas' was written in the sixteenth century. Nepali Ādi kavi Bhānu

Bhakta Achāryya translated Sanskrit 'Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa in nineteenth century.

The first Rāmāyaṇa was written in Nepali prose in 1833 A.D. The title of the work is 'Rāma-Aśvamedha', but the wrok is anonymous. The manuscript of the same has been preserved by the Vir Pustakālay of Kathmandu.

'Rāmāyaṇa Laṇkā Kāṇḍa' is another Rāmāyaṇa in Nepali prose which was written by Pandit Padam Sharma in 1939 A. D. Mr. Balkrishna Pokhrel is of opinion that the author had considerable knowledge of Sanskrit and being inspired by some educated righteous men he wrote the book.

Sree Sundarananda Baurah appeared in the fisrt quarter of nineteenth century and wrote the complete 'Sapta Kāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa' in modern Nepali prose. The work was completed in 1839. The author came from the Newar community and so Newari was his mother tongue. But he was well versed in Nepali language and he selected Nepali as the medium of composition which brought him a fortune. The Rāmāyaṇa by Sundarananda should be treated as an achievement, having 219 sargas (cantos) of moderate length.

If the kāṇḍas analysed it will show that the author has enjoyed much liberty in planning the distribution of Sargas in his Rāmāyaṇa and he has shown an originality in the same, as the scheme differs from that of the original Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa.

We have to mention here that Sundarananda's Rāmāyaṇa is not a literal translation of Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa. In the first few Kāṇḍas he has followed the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa, but in the last two Kāṇḍas he has borrowed his materials from the Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa. Though his work is based on those two Rāmāyaṇas, yet in some places of his work he had to depend upon his own imagination and so he has added some new elements to the original story. In addition to this he has used a typical Nepali background in some convenient situations. This has given a Nepali colour to his Rāmāyaṇa which has been highly appreciated by his countrymen.

Nepali Samkshipta Rāmāyaṇa composed by Pandit Chakrapāni Chalisey is another Nepali Rāmāyaṇa. It is very popular because of its concise form (148 pages) and attractive literary style. The first edition of this book came out in 1925 A.D. and the fifth edition in 1951. Pandit Chalisey had been the editor of two Nepali journals published from Benaras. Later on, he came back to Nepal to serve under Gorkhā Vāshā Prakāshani Samity. Besides his Rāmāyaṇa he has written many other books in Nepali.

Sree Bhairab Singh Thapa is the latest author of the Rāmāyaṇa in modern Nepali prose. His printed volume appeared in 1959. In writing his 'Atmā Rāmāyaṇa' he has taken much help from the same Rāmāyaṇa in Hindi. But the 'Lava-Kuśa Kāṇḍa' is the best one. This Rāmāyaṇa is based on the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa. Sree Thapa's Rāmāyaṇa is the embodiment of a very sincere desire for the cultivation of spiritual sublimity through the pursuit of superknowledge without which salvation of the self could never be expected. The Rāmāyaṇa, therefore, is a literary attempt to preach this doctrine among common people. The characters of the Rāmāyaṇa have been considered to be the symbolic representation of the philosophical concepts, i e. Rāmacandra as Jnāna, Sītā as Śānti, Lakṣmaṇa as Viveka, Bharata as Vairāgya etc.

Sree Gumani Pant and Sree Raghunath Bhatta, the two Nepali poets wrote their Rāmāyaṇa in verses before the most celebrated poet Acharyya Bhānu Bhakta. Sree Gumani Pant belongs to Almorah.

Pandit Raghunath Bhatta was born in Nepal in 1811 A. D. He went to Benaras and translated the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa into Nepali. The book was published from Benaras in 1888. Sree Bhatta's style was much influenced by Sanskrit. So, it was not so lucid as Bhānu Bhakta's work. This Rāmāyaṇa was composed earlier but was published after the emergence of Bhānu's Rāmāyaṇa.

Bhānu Bhakta was born in 1814 at Ramkha village of Tanahu district of Nepal. His father was Dhananjay and

his grand father was Pandit Sreekrishna Acharyya. Bhānu's father had to live at Palpa and Bhānu, in his boyhood days, lived with his grand father. Sreekṛisna Acharyya was a great scholar in Sanskrit and under his guidance Bhanu could learn much of Sanskrit grammar, and literature and astronomy. In his old age, Sreekrishna Acharyya lived in Benaras and was accompanied by Bhānu. This period was spent in the continuous acquisition of knowledge. Bhānu had a chance to meet the contemporary Pandits of Benaras and he participated in the discussion of Hindu Śāstras. Bhānu had to come back to his native place after his grand father breathed his last in Benaras.

While in Benaras, Bhānu dreamt of writing something in his mother tongue and being inspired by this desire he translated some ślokas from the 'Bhaktamāl' and a few verses from the "Prasnottari" by Shankarāchāryya. Bhānu Bhakta got married after he came back to Nepal and he had to stay at his own place where he engaged himself to look after the paternal properties and agricultural operations. But he did not fail to pay attention to his fundamental poetical works, and he tried to concentrate on the "Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa" which was once regularly read by his grandfather. By this time he began to think of his own countrymen very deeply who were ignorant of any knowledge of Sanskrit literature. He tried to initiate the political consciousness and religious and cultural unification of the people of Nepal to gain a national solidarity. Naturally, he had to prepare himself to surmount the problem of language. He had to build up the lively Nepali language from the meagre and insignificant elements of dialect and this new language was used by him as the medium of expression of his Rāmāyaṇa. The nation, for this reason, is grateful to Bhānu Bhakta for his historical contribution to his country. As this was the age of religious and moral consciousness, so he, very rationally, made a selection of the Rāmāyaṇa to serve this purpose. With the intensified zeal he proceeded and completed the translation of "Bāla kāṇḍa" within a short period.

He lost his father in the mean time, but he was not shattered by the out burst of grief. He was ready to solve other essential problmes of his family. He had to go to different places of his country and he gathered very valuable experiences of practical life and contemporary conditions and ideas. Agricultural workers and common men did not get any chance of going through the religious scriptures as most of the books were written in Sanskrit. So they had to quench their thirst only by the elements like *Soai Geet* and *Tukbande* Practically, these can be called folk-songs. In this stage Bhānu appeared like an 'Angel' and filled in the vacuum with the divine gift. Some poems composed by him and the Bāla kāṇḍa were copied and re-copied and were distributed in the different parts of his country within a very short period and all this made him famous

And just after this, he passed through a series of misfortune. He was imprisoned by the King of Nepal and he had to spend there five months for the non-payment of his father's debt. He utilised these days by engaging himself in the work of translation of the other Kāṇḍas of the Rāmāyaṇa. Ultimately he completed Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa Aranya Kāṇḍa, Kiṣkindā Kāṇḍa and Sundara Kāṇḍa, Apart from these, he composed some realistic poems narrating the tragic experiences of his prison-days, which were submitted to the royal authority. As an outcome of this endeavour some jail-reforms were made by the King.

Sree Motirām Bhatta, on the contrary, has offered us a controversial fact about this period of Bhānu Bhakta's life. Sree Bhatta says, the 'Yuddha Kāṇḍa' and 'Uttara Kāṇḍa' were translated in Kathmandu. His 'Badhushiksha' was written as an effect of his experience of spending a night at one of his friend's house on his way back to Tanahu from Kathmandu. His other famous works are *Bhakti Mala Prasnottari, Manirattnamala* etc. But his achievement is his monumental wrok. The Rāmāyaṇa is written in easily understandable lucid Nepali.

Bhānu Bhakta starts his Rāmāyaṇa with the 'Rāmāyaṇa Māhātmya' distributed in 25 ślokas and each śloka consists of four lines. This portion serves the purpose of a prologue and in this he has written about the spiritual significance of the reading of holy books The Rāmāyaṇa. He has also narrated, how the Rāmāyaṇa came into existence. The ślokas seven and eight go like this :

'On hearing this from the utterances of Nārada, Bṛahmā was highly pleased and said to him O Nārada O-Nārada, now listen,—the divine message of the Rāmāyaṇa is the only way to emancipate the world from sin. Goddess Pārvati came to know of all these from Mahādeva and recited the holy name of Rāmacandra. In course of time it was proved that he who would take refuge in Rāmacandra would be free from all wordly distresses.

Bhānu's Rāmāyaṇa contains seven kāṇḍas having 1319 ślokas.

Bhānu Bhakta has beautified his composition with various metres from Sanskrit prosody. This shows his erudition in Sanskrit poetry. The application of different types of metres has saved his Rāmāyaṇa from monotony of metre like traditional 'Payāra'.

In transcreating this great epic Bhānu never negleated the elements of the beauty of nature. But essentially he has chosen the experiences formed in course of his frequent movement in the differnt parts of the country. So, the depictions are the representations of the natural beauty of Nepal Himalays.

Similar to the physical background of the epic, he has revealed the Nepali national characteristics in the characterisation of the human beings. Lakṣmaṇa, as portrayed by him is the carbon-copy of a chivalrous Nepali young man—full of sentiments and vigour. The social elements used in poems are the fragments of his practical experiences of social life of Nepal. Many humourous aspects have been copied from the real life of the country.

In conclusion, we must commend the great epic poet of Nepali literature for introducing Vālmīki through Nepali adaptation, which not only immortalized him but the whole country gained cultural, moral and social cohesion through his admirable poetic genius.

A Critical Recension of The Ramayana by Krttivasa

Tushar Kanti Mahapatra

Quite a few editions of the Rāmāyaṇa by Kṛttivāsa are in circulation, but none of these can claim to be authentic. Not that no attempt was ever made by scholars for a critical recension of the text of this noble epic, but all such attempts went only to prove that the task was a near impossibility. The problems relating to the recension of a text involving interpretations remain as difficult as ever and only a tough band of determined scholars can cope with them if they are ready to go ahead with modern outlook and a real knack for handling, sorting, and summing the manuscripts.

The manuscript libraries are rich with a good number of manuscripts of the Rāmāyaṇa by Kṛttivāsa but the autograph text, the authorial manuscript is still to be discovered. A dependable text, a text that might be considered as verified and corrected by the poet, if not actually written by his hand, is also unsighted. Even a copy of the text which might have been written during the life-time of the poet or copied not much later after his death has not been recovered yet. Only the transmitted texts, the copies of copies, are available in the libraries and in large numbers. These texts, as undependable, create confusions and complicate matters, rather than help arrive at a definite conclusion.

What makes the problem more intricate is that the actual date of birth of the poet or the period when he actually composed the Rāmāyaṇa, is not known to us. In a few texts, however, the names of the ancestors of the poet are furnished chronologically. A description of the royal court of the

ruler who honoured and encouraged the poet and actually helped him financially is also described in these sources, but these descriptions do not refer to any particular date or year straightaway. The date as mentioned there is given in a cryptic language which admits of more than one interpretation and naturally could not help the scholars much in this regard. Dhrubānanda Miśra in his *Mahābaṅsāvali*[1] referred to the name of one Kṛttivāsa. Jayānanda in his *Caitanyamaṅgal*[2] mentioned that Kṛttivāsa was a great poet.

With the insufficient evidences furnished in different sources, the scholars could only assume that the poet might have lived in the fifteenth century A. D. and probably was born on the 6th day of January 1443 and started writing the immortal epic not earlier than 1465[3]. It may be mentioned in this connection that it was not before 1870 that scholars were inquisitive at all about Kṛttivāsa and his private life in any detail. The booklet named *Kṛttivāser Paricaya Saṅgraha* written by Harish Chandra Mitra appeared in that year.

The Rāmāyaṇa by Kṛttivāsa was made widely popular by the *Kathaks* or the traditional story-tellers and by the *Gāyens* who used to sing traditional songs with demonstration. There interest was not to present the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in its original form but to use the name and fame of the eminent poet to earn a good living. So to attract their audience, they used to replace words and expressions and even distort anecdotes according to the taste and demand of their audience. In this way, the original text was changed and numerous interpolations crept in.

The earlier manuscripts containing the seven *Kāṇḍas*[4] of the Rāmāyaṇa, which could have been considered as nearer to the original text, were probably not copied widely by scribes. They used to copy only a *Kāṇḍa* or a *pālā*, a small fraction of the whole text, according to the demand and necessity of the day. The complete manuscripts, containing the whole text, written on hand-made paper or on palm-leaves, which were highly perishable specially in this tropical

country, were not properly taken care of, thus leaving them to gradual decay and final destruction. As such, the original text or a dependable text is probably lost for ever.

The oldest available manuscript of the Rāmāyaṇa by Kṛtivāsa was copied in 1601 A. D.[5] References of at least two more earlier manuscripts are also available, though the manuscripts themselves are now untraced. The manuscript said to be copied in 1501 A.D. was enriched with information about the personal life of the poet as described by a few scholars who could go through the manuscripts. The other one, said to be copied in 15·0[6] was collated by Hirendranath Datta at the time of his preparation of a critical edition of the *Uttarā Kāṇḍa.* Of course, comparing the language and content of these two manuscripts, furnished in different sources, scholars opined that they might have been copied in a much later period[7]. Any way, all these manuscripts referred to here are copies of only one of the seven *Kāṇḍas* or a small part of the Rāmāyaṇa. So, as regards the critical recension of the whole text, these manuscripts could help very little.

A *Kathak* (Narrator) or a *Gāyen* (Singer) was usually interested in presenting before his audience only one *pālā* (episode) or one *Kāṇḍa* as only that could be placed in a complete form during a limited span of a few hours. Moreover, they were conscious of their aptitude and could know which *pālā* would attract their audience more. As their selection depended on their individual fame and success they encouraged the scribes to copy a particular pālā or Kāṇḍa but not the whole text. As a result, a reasonable number of manuscripts of the complete text is not available[8] though the total number of manuscripts of different 'pālas' or 'Kāṇḍas' available amounts to nearly two thousand.[9] The oldest available complete manuscript, copied in 1649, definitely cauld have some value in determining the critical text but the other complete texts are fairly modern and their authenticity is not beyond doubt.

Scribal error is an intricate problem to the critical recension of a text. A scribe can add, omit, replace, change, amplify,

rewrite or interpolate a text. Corruption at the time of copying is normally unavoidable but its degree depends on the attention, intelligence, knowledge, age, practice and habit of the scribe. The dialect of the scribe is also a countable factor. The degree of corruption and interpolation does not depend upon the academic attainment of a scribe, but when most of the scribes were poverty-stricken and were either physically handicapped or teen-agers or fairly old persons, who engaged themselves in copying manuscripts only for a meagre income, corruption on a large scale was inevitable as the scribes sacrificed quality and correctness to the number of copies made. This is how corruption crept in, and increased in number gradually in successive copies through centuries, making the texts interpolated in a great way.

Thus, the problem of critical recension of the Rāmāyaṇa by Kṛttivāsa becomes more and more difficult mainly due to the absence of an 'autograph text' or a dependable text or sufficiently old manuscripts, specially those written in the neighbouring areas where the poet lived, and the non-availability of a reasonable number of complete manuscripts. On the other hand, the availability of a huge number of widely corrupted texts collected from almost every corner of Bengal only added to the difficulty of the task.

In such a situation, the procedure is to find out the 'exemplar' or the 'archetype' by preparing a geneological table of all the available manuscripts.

In the first printed edition of the Rāmāyaṇa by Kṛttivāsa in 1802-03, the method of selecting one of the texts as dependable was probably followed by the publisher. The Serampore Mission Press. But in this edition probably attempts were not made for a critical recension of the text by comparing the other available manuscripts. They only printed the content of one or more manuscripts selected by them arbitrarily. Still, it may be mentioned that in this edition no interpolation was made by the editor at the time of publication. But in their second edition, the editor Jaygopāl Tarkālankār, enjoyed much freedom of his own while editing the text. He was more

eager to make the sacred book popular than to establish an authentic text. So alteration of words and passages from the first edition was made very widely. According to him, the Rāmāyaṇa by Kṛttivāsa was not a refined, evocative, rhetorically corrected literary contribution. We may not appreciate his idea or his comment, but it must be admitted that this edition became enormously popular. His success inspired the later editors to incorporate even more corruption to make their editions all the more popular.

For the critical recension of the Rāmāyaṇa Bangiya Sāhitya Parisad took the first initiative. The Kṛttivāsa *Rāmāyaṇa Samiti* was constituted in 1895 for the purpose. Under the editorship of Hirendranath Datta *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa* and *Uttarā Kāṇḍa* were published in 1307 B. S. and 1310 B. S. respectively. In the absence of a complete dependable text, the editor decided to select an 'exemplar' from among the manuscripts of one 'Kāṇḍa' only, and took relatively old manuscripts as dependable and less free from corruption. He did not try to consider any other matter. As oldness of a manuscript was the only criterion considered by him and as he ignored all other matters as unimportant, his attempt was bound to achieve only a partial success.

Nalinikānta Bhattasāli followed a separate method. He tried to prepare a composite text of the seven Kāṇḍas but could complete only the *Adi Kāṇḍa* in 1936. Inspite of his sincere effort he also could not reach the goal as he was relactant to select an 'exemplar' first.

The latest critical edition of the Rāmāyaṇa was published in 1980, by *Bhārabi*. The editor, Sukhamay Mukhopādhyāya, followed the procedure of selecting an exemplar and had taken the help of at least three complete manuscripts. But he did not give much attention to preparing a geneological table of the manuscripts kept in different libraries to select his exemplar. So, his success also was limited.

More attempts are still due, and we believe a sincere and honest attempt may be successful in the preparation of an authentic text of the Rāmāyaṇa, at least a better composite text

may be prepared. But, in such a case, priority must be given to the preparation of a geneological table of all relevant manuscripts, so that interpretations may be verified and corruptions in the manuscripts checked. Only by keeping this object in view can scholars proceed to find out the actual text, and hope to achieve tangible success.

1. Written either in 1485 A. D. or in the early sixteenth century (1500-1510 A. D.).

2. 1550-1560 A. D.

3. 'আমরা সিদ্ধান্ত করি যে কৃত্তিবাস ১৪৪৩ খ্রীষ্টাব্দের ৬ই জানুয়ারী জন্মগ্রহণ করেছিলেন, ১৪৫৪ খ্রীষ্টাব্দের ৪ঠা জানুয়ারী তিনি উচ্চশিক্ষা লাভের জন্য উত্তরবঙ্গের দিকে রওনা হয়েছিলেন এবং ১৪৬৫ থেকে ১৪৭৬ খ্রীষ্টাব্দের মধ্যে কোনো এক সময়ে রুকনুদ্দীন বারবক শাহের সহায় গৌড়েশ্বরের কাছে সংবর্ধনা লাভ করেছিলেন।' কৃত্তিবাসী রামায়ণ, সম্পাদনা : সুখময় মুখোপাধ্যায়, ভারবি, ১৯৮০. পৃ-৪৯

4. The seven *Kandas* are : Bala or Adi, Ayodhya, Aranya, Kiskindhya, Sundar, Lanka, Uttar.

5. No. 33 Ayodhya Kanda, Bengali Manuscript Library, Calcutta University,

6. No. 208 'Uttarakanda' Bengali MSS Library, C. U.

7. The comments made by Dr. Sukumar Sen is pertinent.

8. Some of the available complete or almost complete manuscripts are : No. 151 (1201 B.S.), No. 1917 (1224 B.S.) and 2574 (1218 B.S.) of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, No. 918 (1234 B. S.) of Visva-Bharati and Nos Add 5590+5591 of British Museum.

9. According to *Catalogue Catalogorum* edited by Prof. Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharya the numbers are :

Adi 143, Ayodhya—128, Aranya 100, Kiskindhya—101, Sundara—189, Lanka—258, Uttara—168, Unknown 224, Bala I, Mithila I, Sapta Kanda—3 Total—1309 ; Total number of Palas—620.

Valmiki and Krittivasa

Ajit Kumar Ghosh

Vālmīki, the author of the Rāmāyaṇa has been ever hailed as the earliest epic poet of the world. His epic has been called Ākhyān or Itihās in his work. It has been also mentioned that the object of this poem is—'Dharmakamārthasahitam Śrotabyamanasuyata' (5/IV). This epic containing twenty thousand ślokas was divided into seven kāṇḍas by the poet. But according to some scholars Vālmīki composed five kāṇḍas only from the Ayodhyākāṇḍa to the Yuddhakāṇḍa. Some portions of the Adikāṇḍa also might be written by the poet. Uttarākāṇḍa was interpolated later on. The end of the Yuddhakāṇḍa also indicates that the epic originally ended with this kāṇḍa. Rāma has ascended the throne, Bibhīṣaṇa and the monkeys have returned to their places after attending the installation ceremony. Rāma ruled for eleven thousand years and performed one hundred horse sacrifices. All kinds of happiness and human welfare were restored during his reign. Such an end clearly indicates that the original poem finished here and the the incidents related in the Uttarākāṇḍa were interpolated later on.

Opinions differ regarding the date of the composition of the Rāmāyaṇa. The widely prevalent opinion is this that the Rāmāyaṇa was written after the Vedās and probably at sometime between the 10th century B.C. and 5th century B. C. The story of the Mahābhārata is older than that of the Rāmāyaṇa, for in the former the internecine quarrels of the primitive tribes of India and the picture of a society uninhibited by regulated laws and customs have been depicted. But in the Rāmāyaṇa we get a picture of a well-regulated discip-

lined society. But the poetic form of the Rāmāyaṇa seems to be earlier. Many have expressed doubts whether the poet Vedavyāsa was the sole author of the Mahābhārata. But there is little doubt in the fact that Vālmīki was the one and only author of the Rāmāyaṇa, his planning, treatment and style are evinced everywhere in this great work.

There are many opinions regarding the origin of the main story of the Rāmāyaṇa and the fusion of the different stories into one harmonious whole of the plot. Lassen has said, the story of the Rāmāyaṇa evolved at four stages and the story is an allegory of the conquest of Deccan by the Aryans. In his opinion in the Rāmāyaṇa it was originally told that Rāma was exiled to the Himalayas but afterwords the place of exile was narrated to be the Deccan and not the Himalayas. Weber has said that Vālmīki got the story from Daśaratha-Jātaka. Dines Candra Sen and Suniti Kumar Chatterji in recent time supported the view of Weber. But according to many Daśaratha-Jātake was written much after the Rāmāyaṇa. Jacobi's view is this that there has been an admixture of history and allegory in the story of the Rāmāyaṇa. In his opinion, Sītā was the goddess of agriculture of the Vedas and the battle of Rāma and Rāvaṇa was indeed a slightly changed version of the battle cf Indra and Vṛittrāsuru. According to Dines Candra Sen many legends and ballads from the hoary past have been incorporated in the Rāmāyaṇa. In his view in the Rāmāyaṇa there has been the fusion of three legends—the legend of Rāma, the Ravaṇa legend current in the South and the legend of the monkey-god Hanumāna.

According to Dr. A. B. keith the probable date of the Rāmāyaṇa would be the 4th century B.C. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji has said that Vālmīki gave a final integrated shape to his work probably between the 5th and the 2nd century B.C. It is indeed beyond reason to think that Vālmīki belonged to such a later date. The mention of the Buddhists and Jainas indicate that some portions of the Rāmāyaṇa might have been written at a later stage which might be interpolated in

different times. In the Ayodhyākāṇḍa Rāma refutes the atheism of Jābali with these words, 'Yatha hi corah sa tathā hi Buddha stathāgtaam nāstikamatra biddhi' (34) Buddha is as punishable as a thief, Tathagata Buddha should be treated as an atheist. In the Kiṣkindhyākāṇḍa Rama says to Vālī 'Aryena mama Māndhātrā byasanam ghoramipsitam/ Sramāṇena krite pāpe yathā pāpam kritam tvayā (18/33)—in the past Arya Mandhātā punished severely a Jaina who committed a sin like you. Ayodhyākāṇḍa and Kiṣkindhyākāṇḍa are included in the original composition of Vālmīki. It is hoped that the scholars on the Rāmāyaṇa will throw light on the mention of Buddhadeva and the Jaina mendicants in the Rāmāyaṇa which is believed to have been written at a time much earlier than that of Buddha.

Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa is the best of the earliest epics of the world in respect of originality in conception, well-knit and unified plot construction, sublimity of poetry, grandeur of description and exquisitely fiine characterisation. The Iliad has followed the dramatic method, it has started abruptly and ended suddenly. But the Rāmāyaṇa has followed the descriptive method, i.e. it has started with birth and ended in full fruition and ennobled bliss. Michael Madhusudan Datt has said, Homer is full of battles. But Vālmīki's battles are more heroic and elaborately drawn. Homer had an obvious bias for the Greeks but Vālmīki in spite of his having larger sympathy for Rāmacandra and his armies was equally interested to show the splendour, heroism and noble virtues of the Rākṣasas. With him the democratically ruled welfare-state Ayodhyā and the authortiarian, power-intoxicated state of Laṅkā got equal treatment. In the Iliad the primitive barbaric power has been laid bare in all its sanguinary but in the Rāmāyaṇa the pictures of noble sacrifice, unparalleled virtues and supreme menliness have been shown side by side with extreme greed, excessive cruelty and wide spread violence. The Rāmāyaṇa is the noblest poem for this reason that here the vastness and the wide expanse of the outer life have combined well with the depth and minuteness of the inner life. In many

poetical works we get detailed descriptions of the hatred and conflict between man and man but the Rāmāyaṇa is unique in this respect that here we find ever-ennobling examples of love, amity and human understanding. The Rāmāyaṇa has indeed held aloft the highest ideals of human relation in the history of mankind.

With the origin and development of the different modern Indian languages from the tenth century A.D. onwards the Rāmāyaṇa was translated into Bengali language also. But in the beginning the story of the Rāmāyaṇa reached the masses through scattered songs, Kathakatā, Pāncāli etc. The Rāmāyaṇa of Kṛttivāsa was also sung like a Pāncāli song. His Rāmāyaṇa like a folk song was carried from mouth to mouth to the masses. There is evidence in the Rāmāyaṇa itself that it was meant to be sung 'Vinājantre Kuśilava Rāmāyaṇa gāy/Munirisi ādi sabe bimohita tay.' Kṛttivāsi Rāmāyaṇa was sung by the folk-singers to the people and so according to the taste and demand of the audience new topics and characters were always introduced in the Rāmāyaṇa. Kṛttivāsi Rāmāyaṇa was based on Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa but it was never a literal translation of the Sanskrit original. The poets and the singers always added new materials in order to please the audiences. Vālmiki had written for the whole of India but Kṛttivāsa wrote for the Bengalees only. Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa was a grand Indian epic, but the Rāmāyaṇa of Kṛttivāsa was merely a Bengali poem. Vālmiki's soaring imagination, majestic grandeur, high sublimity and vastness of areas covered cannot be expected in Krttivāsa, whose imagination is limited and experience restricted within the uneventful and colourless precincts of a rural Bengali society. The awe-inspiring seas, the illimitable expanse of the variegated skies, the majestic mountains and the dense forests have inspired the matchless poetry of Vālmiki, while Kṛttivāsa fixed his eyes on the tender beauty of Bengal's nature—the green meadow, the singing birds, the sweet fragrance of flowers and the quiet-flowing rivers. Kṛttivāsa is not particularly interested in creating images after images; poetic beauty does not

fascinate him very much, nor is he very much moved by rhetorical embellishment. The sound, music, cadence and vitality of Sanskrit words and sentences have been fully utilised by Vālmīki. But Kṛttivāsa has used a language which is sweet and mellow and which is so near to us and which is very much rooted to the soil. Vālmīki is unrivalled in heroic, violent and pathetic sentiments. But in Kṛttivāsa there are some verbal duels and mock heroic antics, but there is no real horoic sentiment. There are many instances in his Rāmāyaṇa where tears have rolled down the cheeks of the characters, but there is no sublime, soul-stirring tragic grief in it. The farcical and devotional elements predo minate in the Bengali Rāmāyaṇa. To please his audiences Kṛttivāsa has introduced many grotesque and exaggerated topics in his work, at many times he has made witty and ironical remarks and laughed with his audiences in full of fun and mirth. The devotional elements have been introduced probably under the Vaiṣṇava influence. Vālmīki's Rāma is 'Sarbaguṇopeta Naracandramā', but he is not a God. To Kṛttivāsa he is an incarnation of God, the deliverer of his devotees. In the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa we get a glimpse of a broad-based society controlled by the Vedic rituals. But in the Kṛttivāsī Rāmāyaṇa we find a picture of a Bengali society with its customs, ceremonties, moral and religious values.

In the Ādikāṇḍa Vālmīki has given a detailed description of the city of Ayodhyā. Ayodhyā has been described as a very prosperous city mainly based on agriculture. During the reign of Daśaratha the citizens of Ayodhyā were pious, moral and dutiful. The antagonism between Vaśiṣṭha and Viśwāmitra has been elaborately narrated in this kāṇḍa. No sage has been depicted as mean and ludicrous. Daśaratha has not deceived Viśwāmitra, he sent Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with Viśwāmitra at the first time to kill the Rākṣasī Tāḍakā. Vālmīki has shown an attitude, liberal and free from moral inhibition in narrating the episode of Ahalyā. Ahalyā could recognise Indra and out of curiosity agreed to the amorous

proposal of Indra—'Matinchakāra durmedhā devarāja-kutuhalāt (Adi 48/19). Having been satisfied with the amorous act she helped Indra to escape—'Kṛitārthāsmi suraśreṣtha gachamitah prabho". Indra also having had his full satisfaction laughed and said, as he has come, so he goes—'Susroni paritushtohsmi gamisyāmi yathāgatam.'

In the Ādikāṇḍa of Kṛttivāsa his characteristics have been fully reflected. The divine characters are predominant in his Rāmāyaṇa. Rāma has been presented as an incarnation of God. The Vaiṣṇava influence is pronounced in the Ratnākara episode and his incantation of the name of Rāma incessantly. The stories of Jatāyu, Śani, Andhakmuni and Sambarāsura are all his own and not found in the original Rāmāyaṇa. Kṛttivāsa is indeed adept in describing marriage ceremony. He has given a detailed description of Daśaratha's marriage which is not found in Vālmiki. In the Bengali Rāmāyaṇa Kaikeyī is the second wife of Daśaratha but in the Sanskrit original she is the youngest wife. The Vaiṣṇava influence is discernible in the juvenile plays and pranks of Rāmacandra. All the details of the marriage ceremony of Rāma and Sītā have been based on a typically Bengali marriage-ceremony. Kṛttivāsa is all over full of pathos. Daśaratha is overwhelmed with uncontrollable tears while bidding goodbye to Rāmacandra. Such unrestrained tearful feelings for a heroic king like Daśaratha can be shown by a Bengali poet only. In the Bengali Rāmāyana Daśaratha has been shown to be weak and vacillating when Viśwāmitra first demanded Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa for killing Tāḍakā Daśaratha gave him Bharat and Śatrughṇa. Such deception on the part of Daśaratha is not found in Vālmīki. For the sake of fun Kṛttivāsa has taken liberties with many respected persons. Viśwāmitra is seized with terror at the sight of Tāḍakā - Ubhay bhrātār madhye thāki munibar/Dur haite dekhālen Tādakār ghar/Kar bāḍāiā tār ghar dekhāyiā/Ati trāse munibar yān palāiyā/. Vālmīki could not conceive such a caricature of Viśwāmitra. The episode of Ahalyā has been changed thoroughly

by Kṛttivāsa in view of the moral susceptibilities of the Bengali audiences.

Ayodhyākāṇḍa is the best of all kāṇda in Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa. The great poet is at his best in giving a description of the city of Ayodhyā and its people. This kāṇḍa may be called a drama in itself with sudden turn of events and rapid change of fortunes. When Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa are going in exile, the whole city is lamenting and almost all the people are following them. Such a spectacle of grief is rarely seen any where. The character of Rāmacandra has been drawn here as the epitome of all supreme virtues. But Lakṣmaṇa is diametrically opposite to his brother. He is rude and shockingly outspoken. He says,—'Hanishye pitaram bṛddham Kaikeyāśaktamānasam' or 'Bharatasya badhe doṣam nāham paśyāmi Rāghava' or 'Kaikeyincha badhiśyāmi sanubandham sabāndhabam'. Rāma has constantly tried to pacify and restrain his arrogant and intolerant dear young brother.

Kṛttivāsa has narrated in brief the incidents in this kāṇḍa. He has aimed to present Lakṣmaṇa as an ideal character. Hence there is no trace of his arrogance and disrespect to his elders in the Bengali version. There is no depth of pathos in Kṛttivāsa but here and there are farcical elements which are of a coarse nature.

In the Araṇyakāṇḍa there are moving descriptions of enthralling beauty of the forests and also the hideous activities of the ferocious Rākṣasas. The battle of man and demon starts from this kāṇḍa. In the Bengali Rāmāyaṇa the charming beauty of the forest with its rivers, lakes, trees, creepers, flowers etc. are all absent. But Kṛttivāsa has followed Vālmīki in identifying grief-stricken mind of Rāma with the objects of nature. There are some battle-scenes in Kṛttivāsa also, but they fail to arouse any real heroic feelings. Kṛttivāsa has widely differed from Vālmīki in his narration of the adbuction of Sītā. In Vālmīki Rāvaṇa first proposes to Sītā to marry him, on her refusal he abducts her by force. The marking by Lakṣmaṇa around the cottage is an original invention of Kṛttivāsa. Vālmīki is free from any moral inhibition when he

is poetically inspired to give a wonderful description of Sītā being carried away by Rāvaṇa—Śā hemabarnā nilāngam maithili rakshasadipam/susubhe kanchani kanchi nilam gaja-mibāsritā. In the Bengali Rāmāyaṇa Lakṣmaṇa's attitude to Sītā is much more restrained and respectful than what we find in the Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇa.

In the Kiṣkindhyā kāṇḍa the monkey-story has been introduced to the main plot. In this kāṇḍa also Vālmīki has excelled in portraying nature in its varying colours and moods, in its exquisite charm and awe-inspiring majesty. There are some new incidents invented by Kṛttivāsa in this kāṇḍa.

Hanumāna is the undisputed hero in Sundarakāṇḍa. He brings the news of the abducted Sītā. Laṅkā in its pomp, splendeour and glittering colour has been presented before us through the eyes of Hanumāna. Kṛttivāsa has introduced many original stories in this kāṇḍa also and his particular fancy for what is grotesque and chimerical is evident here also.

Yuddhakāṇḍa is the best in respect of herioc and violent sentiments. Vālmīki's superiority to other epic poets in war scenes is beyond any question. The details of war—the valour and the skilful use of deadly weapons, the excitement, wrath and vengeance have all been described in minute details by Vālmīki. The fiercest and long-drawn battle occurred between Rāma and Rāvaṇa. Kṛttivāsa has introduced many new incidents in this kāṇḍa. Taraṇīsen, Virbāhu, Bhasmalochan, Mahirāvaṇ and Ahirāvaṇ, the Durgāpuja celebrated by Rāma are all new subjects introduced by Kṛttivāsa. The Bhakti elements are predominant in this kāṇḍa also.

Vālmīki's epic is matchless in spontaneous and grand beauty and deep and abiding passion and lofty sentiments. Vālmīki's use of words speaks of his mastery over language and supreme command over expression. He is equally at ease to describe the world of nature and the city life humming with human activity. Each and every śloka of Vālmīki is embellished with a rhetorical figure but nowhere there is any

trace of any *tour de force*. He has a particular fascination for similes. The seas, the mountains and the sky have inspired him with an inexhaustible source of similes.

Kṛttivāsa's materials are limited and his imagination does not go very far. There is no grand beauty of the seas, the mountains and the forests in his work. He composed his Rāmāyaṇa for the illiterate or half-educated masses whose imagination and power of appreciation were very much limited. His rhetorical figures are very commonplace. He has drawn from near and recognised sources. The use of words as we find in 'chhaḍā' and 'pāncāli' has been adopted by Kṛttivāsa. That is why he has revelled so much in onomatopoetic and alliterative words.

Two Immortal Poets : A Comparison

Asit K. Banerjee

I

Kṛttivāsa Ojhā, the accepted national poet of medieval Bengal, is still held as one of the most popular narrative poets in modern Bengal also. His *Rāmāyaṇa-pāñcālī* (Rāmāyaṇa described in narrative versical form) centres round the immortal epic of Vālmīki, though not a *verbatim* translation of the Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇa.

Kṛtitvāsa was born towards the close of 14th. century or at the beginning of 15th. century in Fulia, a small village not far from Calcutta. But it is a matter of regret that reliable facts, details of his life and the date of his composition are still obscure and meagre. There are some references to his ancestry which migrated from eastern Bengal (now Bangladesh), and a few statements of his boyhood days in a lengthy description appended at the end of his work, which are claimed by some scholars as true, genuine and composed by the poet himself. But as many anomalies of dates and facts cropped up in these lines, it is certain that most of these lines are entirely interpolated by copyists and *Kathakas* (professional story tellers). In this connection we may state here that after scrutinising some of the fairly older manuscripts kept in the Manuscript Library, Department of Bengali, Calcutta University, we have found that the so called autobiographical lines referred above, are not entirely baseless. As the poet was most popular throughout Bengal, a few copies of whole of seven 'kāṇḍas' and many copies in parts were circulated in every nook and corner of far off villages. Immense popularity demanded reshuffling, alteration, interpolation of words and addition or omission

of sentences in the Mss. Hence the printed versions circulated at Calcutta book market, can hardly be accepted as cent per-cent genuine. But still Kṛttivāsa is Kṛttivāsa. Dr Dinesh Chandra Sen, the first historian of Bengali literature in the true sense, once remarked that the Gangā flowing by the side of Calcutta, with her muddy and unclean water, is the same Gangā coming down from the height of Gangottarī. In the same way we can see that inspite of corruptions in the language of Mss. made by the copyists, 'kathakas', printers, publishers and editors, the popularity of Kṛttivāsa is still maintained. Be that as it may, he will always be remembered as a saintly poet who gave the medieval Bengali culture a final shape before the advent of Śrī-Caitanyadeva.

The *Rāmāyaṇa-pāncālī* of Kṛttivāsa is neither an epic of art' nor an epic of growth. At best it is a simple narrative poetry having no literary pretension. He composed the book taking enough materials from Vālmīki and added his own stories and incidents from a new perspective. The following episodes are some times of his own invention, some times taken from legends, mythologies, Purāṇas and Kāvyas :

> The story of Saudasa, Dilip and Raghu ; evil design of Śani in the kingdom of Daśaratha ; birth of Gaṇeśa ; killing of Sambarāsura ; Kaikeyī receives boon from Daśaratha ; friendship of Rāmacandra with Guhaka, an outcaste ; battle of Vīrvāhu, the younger brother of Meghanāda ; battle of Taraṇīsen ; virtuous and honest son of Bibhīṣaṇa ; strange incident of Mahirāvaṇa and Ahirāvaṇa ; concealing Sun-god under the armpit of Hanumān ; untimely worship ('akāla-bodhana') of Caṇḍi by Rāmacandra for killing Rāvaṇa ; story of collecting one hundred and eight blue lotus ; acquiring Rāvaṇa's death-shaft from Mandodarī by Hanumān under false and tricky identity ; Rāvaṇa teaches politics and king's duties to Rāma just before his death ; entreated by the sisters Sītā draws a sketch of Rāvaṇa by a chalk pencil, and Rāma's growing suspicion on the chastity of Sītā

which ultimately causes her banishment ; battle of Lava and Kuśa etc., etc.

Some of these stories arose from the folk tradition ingrained in rural Bengal.

Kṛttivāsa collected many stories from *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa, Yogavāśiṣṭha Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata* of Vyāsdeva, *Jaimini Bhārata, Devī Bhāgavata, Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, Skanda Purāṇa, Kūrma Purāṇa, Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa, Kālikā Purāṇa*, and so on and so forth. These facts prove that Kṛttivāsa was well-acquainted with Sanskrit Purāṇas and Kāvyas. He was always referred to in the geneological narratives (*Kulaji* literature) as *Paṇḍit* and *Dhīmān* a learned man with sharp intelligence. His deep knowledge of Sanskrit Kāvyas and Purāṇas has belied the heresy that he composed his *Rāmāyaṇa-pāncāli* not from Sanskrit original, but by stories from the 'kathakas' or story tellers.

His lengthy composition was made in simple language and simpler *Payār* metre. Intentionally he avoided Sanskritic pedantry and literary embellishment, as he wrote for the mass, and not for the class. Though he used most unvarnished language, yet some poetic excellence can be traced in his composition. To reach the unsophisticated mind of village folk Kṛttivāsa created and recreated Vālmīki in such a manner that the people of Bengal, with little education or no education, would be able to find pleasure and solace of mind in simple verses of the Bengali poet.

Kṛttivāsa is inimitable and original in character painting. Though he is a close follower of Vālmīki, he adds some new dimensions to his characters. It is certain that his characters are not exact replica of his illustrious predecessor, nor an unintelligent copy of the same. He added local colouring with some new characteristics conducive to the mind of the people for whom this *Pāncāli* was composed. Of course some fastidious critics may obliquely observe that a mediocre vernacular poet like Kṛttivāsa was unable to appreciate the highest ideal and the throbbing liveliness of the characters of

Vālmīki. But it has already been pointed out that Kṛttivāsa wrote for the common and average Bengali who had no access to the original due to their unfamiliarity with Sanskrit. Hence he tried to paint the characters with local colour that would satisfy the taste and understanding of the rural listeners. But we cannot deny the fact that the high stature of the characters of Vālmīki has been made a little dwarfish in Kṛttivāsa. But this does not necessarily prove his inability to appreciate Vālmīki. He was very much eager for the acceptability of his work by the society of mediocres. Vālmīki's characters are ideal and real, human and divine, despicable and sublime. They are vivacious, complex, variegated and above the common level in nobility and in savagery. In his great book one can find dramatic suddenness, turning of strange events and a clash of interest coupled with psychological conflict as are common in modern novels and dramas. A present-day-reader, having moderate taste in classical literature, will certainly be rewarded with some of the best specimens of Vālmīki's wonderful creations A few may be noted here :

> Daśaratha's painful filial affection ; mean self-interest of Kaikeyī ; ideal conjugal love of Sītā and Rāma : robust and realistic attitude of Lakṣmaṇa with affection and reverence to his elder brother and sister-in law ; the impeccable character of saintly Bharata ; abominable, sinful and roguish character of Rāvaṇa ; —to exemplify a few.

After a close scrutiny of Vālmīki's *magnum opus* we may be satisfied with a curious blending of epic grandeur, dramatic action and lyrical excellence mixed up unextricably. Though society, persons and values of life had changed frequently as the evolution of history demanded, the main infra structure of the country's inner-most self will remain unaltered for ever in this great epic, composed by a sage-poet of ancient India, who was a seer, a creator and a revealer of human heart.

II

It is no denying the fact that Kṛttivāsa has been a little eclipsed by the superhuman genius of Vālmīki when we compare the characters of the two. The Bengali poet could not perhaps fully follow the vastness of the *Ārṣa Rāmāyaṇa* (the Rāmāyaṇa composed by a saint), neither was he able to master the subtle imagination of Valmīki, greatness of human character and the lowest depravity of mankind. Rāma of Kṛttivāsa has been changed into a kind-hearted god-like good person admired and adored by his followers and devotees. Valour is not the only yardstick to measure him with. Some times he was swayed away by emotional upsurge when tears rolled down from his lotus-like eyes. Lakṣmaṇa's boast some times verges on impudent rashness. Daśaratha is a henpecked hapless impotent old man. Kaikeyī is no better than a self-interested village house wife. Bharata, though a noble and sacrificing young man, but his nobility is not strikingly individualistic, rather timid and shadowy. Hanumāna, the great son of *Pabana,* the wind-god, has become a family servant of a big landlord's house. Even he could not conceal his apish frivolities though well-versed in Vedas. Vedānga and military science. Kṛttivāsa's Sītā is fragile. soft and boneless. She is tolerant, she is like a mute young wife in a big joint family of olden days. She is a paragon of feminine virtue and beacon light of chastity. But she is not strong like Vālmīki's. Rāvaṇa, the Rākṣasa king, a great hero no doubt, but is abominably barbarous and a veritable sinner. But Kṛttivāsa added one notable peculiarty to this character, and that is covert devotion to Rāmacandra.

The Rāmāyaṇa legends, circulated in the north and south India, have been given a Bengali shape by Kṛttivāsa. We may copiously find medieval Bengali life reflected in the Rāmāyaṇa-pāncāli. Kṛttivāsa's characters do not live in the Olympia of imagination. They are real, pulsating with life. Of course they are not so much individualistic, strong and distinctive like those of Vālmīki. It is presumed that owing to the humid

climate of eastern India, flat surface of the country and riverain tracts Kṛttivāsa's characters have become sweet, soft and kind-hearted. Sītā, the symbol of feminine virtue and chastity in the Bengali Rāmāyaṇa, is not enough strong like that of Vālmiki. She was a daughter of a Kṣatriya king wedded to a superhuman personality belonging to the same race. So she was never timid, awe-striken and speechless like her Bengali counter part. In Vālmīki some times she was very outspoken and strong critic of the follies and weakness of her near and dear ones. Just before banishment Rāma was hesitating to take her with him in the uncongenial forest life infested with cannibals and prowling beasts. At the unbecoming timidity of her husband the daughter of a Kṣatriya king at once flew into rage and retorted that her father, king Janaka, would have never given his daughter in marriage to Rāma, had he known earlier that this Kṣatriya prince was no better than an effiminate timid person, who would be afraid to protect his wife from the danger of forest life. Of course Rāma gave a smile and assured her that he really intended to take her with him in banishment, and he cared a pin's head regarding the demons and other denizens of dark forest. He was rather trying to gauge her intensity of desire to accompany him. Now he is satisfied that she is his true consort in weal and woe, in pleasure and pain, in misfortune and good days. This sort of strong individuality, discernible in Sītā, is almost absent in Kṛttivāsa. After the fall of Lankā and destruction of all the Rākṣasas on the side of Rāvaṇa Sītā was rescued by Rāma's astounding prowess. But when she was eagerly waiting for his call to join him after a separation of woeful days, she was thunder-struck when Rāma flatly refused to accept her as his honoured wife owing to her stay in Rāvaṇa's custody. As a flickering lamp sticks to a person's eyes who suffers from ophthalmia, so her presence is unwelcome to him. She is at liberty to take any body as her partner and can depart wherever she likes to go. This invective is bitter, heartless and most unbecoming of a person like Rāmacandra. Still she maintains calmness and says to her husband :

"Perhaps you have deducted your conclusion on women from the examples of ordinary females, and you have concluded that all women are faithless. Though you are a man of masterly qualities, you have miserably failed in appreciating the chastity of ladies of high rank. Was not I born from the sacrificial ground of the King Janaka ?" But in the same circumstance Sītā of Kṛttivasa remarked feebly : "The vicious Rāvaṇa only touched me when he was carrying me off. Why do you think me as an ordinary woman ?"

Rāvaṇa of Kṛttivāsa was a sinner and rogue no doubt, but he disclosed his identity to Rāma just before his death. He was in his previous birth a *bhakta* of Viṣṇu. But for a condemnable folly he was cursed to be born in the Rāksasa race. It was decreed that if he meets Rāmacandra, the *Avatār* of Viṣṇu, as an arch enemy, then and only then he would be redeemed from the accursed life of a Rakṣasa Hence this calamity and misfortune which separated him from his Lord. His last words to Rāma are as follows : "You are the Lord of destitutes like myself. You are the rescuer and redeemer of fallen ones. Kindly place your feet on my head so that I may die peacefully and regain your grace after the termination of this heinous life."

After much penitence and wailing the great misguided warrior breathed his last. But Vālmīki's Ravaṇa was out and out a vicious, abominable, barbarous and lustful Rākṣasa. There was not an iota of penitence or a drop of tears for his misdeed. He died an uncompromising grand fellow though hated by the gods and pious men. Vālmīki would never allow the most wicked Rāvaṇa to be subdued like a wretched weakling, nor a covert devotee.

Vālmīki's epic is an epitome of grand style. His characters are far from common men and women. But no one of them is lifeless or artificial, neither prudish, nor extravagant in code and conduct. The first and the last kāṇḍas (*Vāla* and *Uttar*) have been devoted to paint Rāma as *Brahma* incarnate. Hence some of the critics are of opinion that the two books of the above description did not come from the pen of the sage-

poet or much changes crept in during the several centuries. It may be surmised that these changes were deliberately made by the votaries of Ramacandra when he was raised on the pedestal of divinity. Barring these two kāṇḍas the rest of the epic abounds with real characters of Gods, demigods, monkies and human beings. Though the Kavi-guru tried to paint Rāmacandra as an ideal man, he did not shrink back from depicting him with some human frailties and weakness. One such instance may be cited here. After the abduction of Sita disheartened Rāmacandra accompanied by Lakṣmaṇa, roamed helter-skelter in search of his beloved wife in hills and dales when spring season appeared. Rāma, the most restrained man, lost control of his mental equilibrium and wailed like an ordinary man. Being separated from Sitā he was so bewildered with earthly passion that unrestrained amorous rhapsodies gushed out from his lips. But Kṛttivāsa would have thought it to be sacrilegious to paint the Lord incarnate as a love-striken common man pining for his absentee consort and indulging in exuberance of gross passion. To Kṛttivāsa Rāmacandra was no human character, rather the 'Pūrṇa-Brahma' in human form. So all these trivialities and weaknesses should be erased from the behaviour of Rāma-candra. Hence he wanted to weed out all thistles from the ideal character of the hero so as to make him bloom like a thousand petal lotus. Kṛttivāsa idealized a Kṣatriya prince to be elevated to the highest pinnacle of divinity. On the other hand, Vālmīki tried to conceive a character intermingled with human and divine qualities. His epic was meant for the elites and pundits, and Krttivasa's *Rāmāyaṇa-pāñcāli* was made for the ordinary people who had scanty education or no education at all. Our Bengali poet immortalized Bengali version of the Rāmāyaṇa in such a manner that the people of Bengal, of all ages to come, would be able to find solace in grief, tranq-uillity in anxiety and restraint in enjoyment. Shadows of history, with much struts and frets, vanish in the oblivion, while the immortal epic of the sage-poet and narrative poetry of Kṛttivāsa, concerning the saga of Rāmacandra, will ever remain fresh and lively in the memory of readers irrespective of caste, creed and belief.

Krttivasa, Sri Chaitanyadeva and Gaudyia Vaisnavism

Sukhendusundar Ganguly

Śrī Chaitanyadeva was the founder of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Cult. He was born in 1486 A.D. and died in 1533 A.D. Kṛttivāsa the famous poet of Bengal was born probably in 1398 A D. and composed his Rāma Pancāli in the first half of fifteen century A.D. So there is nothing unnatural if Śrī Chaitanya swa influenced by Kṛttivāsa.

Kṛttivāsa was the first of the Bengalee poet to make Rāmacandra a God-Man and establish Rāma-worship like Kṛṣṇa-worship. This occurred during the fifteenth century A.D., before the advent of Śrī Chaitanyadeva. Kṛttivāssa was a name-worshipper and he gave much importance on the devotion of Hanumāna as servant. We all know the episode of how the bandit Ratnākara became the sage Vālmīki by uttering the name of Rāma. We also aware of the deep devotion of Hanumāma towards Rāma. We firmly believe that Śrī Chaitanyadeva was influenced by Kṛttivāsa. So far name-worship and Dāsya Bhakti are concerned as he was influenced by Jayadeva, Vidyāpati, Candīdāsa and Bilwa-mangal his predecessors. They all prepared the ground for Śrī Chaitanyadeva.

But we can trace influence of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism on the Rāmāyaṇa of Kṛttivāsa. The reason is very clear, the manuscripts of the Rāmāyaṇa so far discovered are all copied after the demise of Śrī Chaitanyadeva. Dr. Nalinikanta Bhattasali claimed that the manuscript copied probably in 1571 Śaka i.e. 1649 A.D. kept in his custody as the oldest one, though the manuscript of Uttara Kāṇḍa of Calcutta

University (MSS. No. 208) was copied in 1580 A.D. and another manuscript of the Rāmāyaṇa preserved in the Calcutta University was copied in 1610 A.D. The printed editions of the Rāmayaṇa of Kṛttivāsa are all of the ninteenth century.

The Rāmāyaṇa of Kṛttivāsa has different readings as time and places differ. So long the Rāmāyaṇa was recorded in the manuscript only and its circulation was limited within the Kathakas and by singer and professonal story tellers. The printed editions of the Rāmāyaṇa differ much with the original manuscript. The influence of Bhakti is highly noticeable in them ; and this is mostly due to Śrī Chaitanya-deva. In the printed books the poet has explained how the name of God recdeems the sinning soul. He asks :

রাম নাম লইতে না কর ভাই হেলা।
ভব সিন্ধু তরিবারে রাম নাম ভেলা॥

(Brother, do not forget to take the name of Rāma, it is the boat to take your soul at the gate of Heaven).

In another place he says,

রাম নাম স্মরিলে যমের দায় তরি।
শ্রীরামের প্রীতে ভাই মুখে বল হরি॥

(One who remembers the name of Rāma, is released from the pangs of Yama, so to please Rāma, brother, chant the name of Hari).

Hence the name or Hari reminds us the advocacy of Śrī Chaitanyadeva for the three names 'Hari, Kṛṣṇa and Rāma—

হরে কৃষ্ণ হরে কৃষ্ণ কৃষ্ণ কৃষ্ণ হরে হরে।
হরে রাম হরে রাম রাম রাম হরে হরে॥

Śrī Chaitanyadeva is famous for the spread of devotion to Hari in Bengal, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh (Vṛndāvan). After Śrī Chaitanya the philosophy of name (Nama-tattwa) became the keynote of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava cult. This influenced the post-Chaitanya recensions of the Rāmāyaṇa. We may cite examples to prove this fact. Taraṇi Sen was the son of Vibhīṣaṇa ; one of the devotees and followers of Rāma, came

to fight with Rāma. The monkeys were astonished to see his whole body as well as his charriot bedecked with the name of Rāma. Rāmacandra hesitated to kill his ardent devotee. He said :

কার্য নাই সীতা আমি না যাব রাজ্যেতে।
কেমনে মারিব বান ভক্তের অঙ্গেতে ॥
কণ্টক ফুটিলে মম ভক্তের শরীরে।
শেলের সমান বাজে আমার অন্তরে ॥
ভক্ত মোর পিতা মাতা ভক্ত মোর প্রাণ।
কেমনে এমন ভক্তে প্রহারিব বাণ ॥

(I shall go back without rescuing Sītā, I shall not return to my Kingdom even, if I am to pierce such a devotee. If a prick sticks into the body of devotee, it hits me like a lance. Devotee is my father, devotee is my mother, devotee is my heart. Oh, how can I kill such a devotee ?).

This is solely because of the influence of Śrī Caitanyadeva on the Rāmāyaṇa (post-Caitanya recension) that made Tarani Sen behave like wise. We all know that Caitanyadeva made it a compulsory ritual for all the Vaiṣṇavas to mark their forehead and bodies with the name of Kṛṣṇa or Hari by *tilaka*. And it was not Kṛttivāsa but Śrī Caitanyadeva, whose iufluence made the several head of Tarani Sen chant the name of Rāma.

The influence of Vaiṣṇavism on Kṛttivāsa is pre-Caitanya affair no doubt, but what is to be noted in the post-Caitanya Rāmāyaṇa is the increase of Bhaktirasa. This quantitative change of Bhakti made definite change of the Rāmāyaṇa of Kṛttivāsa. Thus Rāmacandra became the God of love,—he is emotional, tearful and with a heart of a Bengalee mother. In place of Vālmīki's hero Rāma, the ideal man, we get of pre-Caitanya period a Rāmāyaṇa the saviour Rāma the God of the devotees. Rāvaṇa here is also a powerful enemy of Rāma but his heart is washed away with the flow of Bhakti. While he came to fight with Rāma, Rāvaṇa was much pleased to witness Nārāyaṇa in him. He became joyful when he thought that he

would be able to enter heaven if he was killed by Rāma. He said.

যত্তপি রামের হাতে হয়ত মরণ।
একান্তে বৈকুণ্ঠে যাব, না হয় খণ্ডন॥

(If I die at the hand of Rāma I shall be able to go to Heaven, there is no doubt in it.)

He consoled Mandodorī, his chief-queen, before going to the battle field with these words :

মরিব বামের হাতে ভাগ্যে যদি আছে।
যমের না হবে সাধ্য ঘনাইতে কাছে॥
বিষ্ণুদূত লয়ে যাবে তুলিয়া বিমানে।
সমান প্রতাপে যাব জীবনে মরণে॥

(I shall die at the hand of Rāma, if my luck favours. Yama will not be able to come to me. The agent of Viṣṇu will take me to Heaven in his Chariot and thus I shall be blessed equally in life and death).

Rāma also hesitated to kill his devotee-in-disguise. He said :

এমন ভক্তে আমি করিব সংহার।
বিশ্বে কেহ রাম নাম না লইবে আর॥

(How shall I kill such a devotee of mine, none will take the name of Rāma in the world).

This Rāma, the God of the devotees, tearful, emotional and affectionate in character, naturally reminds us of the *Bhakta-vatsala* Caitanyadeva. Rāma and Śrī Caitanyadeva here become one and the same person.

It is not unlikely that the influence of Bhakti (devotion) was present in the Rāmāyaṇa of Kṛttivāsa berore Śrī Caitanaya-deva. Kṛttivāsa might have collected it from various sources i.e. from Adhyatmya Rāmāyaṇa, Yogabāsiṣṭha Rāmāyaṇa etc. But the excess of devotion which we notice in the present

editions of the Kṛttivāsi Rāmāyaṇa are no doubt due to the influence of Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava cult. The singer arranged the *pālās* of Kṛttivāsa's Śrī Rāma-Pāncāli according to the necessity of time and taste of the people who hear them. This is why the version of the Rāmāyṇa differs from its original translation of Kṛttivāsa, so much so that now-a-days a linguist may not find a single line of the poet in the present editions. Through generation of inspired minstrels and spell-bound listeners, the nucleus of Kṛttivāsa's Śrī Rāma-Pāncāli, the finest essence of has work has survived, 'though the linguistic structure may have very considerably changed There is no wonder if post-Caitanya Rāmāyaṇa has been influenced to a great extent by Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava cult.

So it may be concluded with some certainty that Caitanya's mystic Bhaktivāda was much influenced by the *nāma-tattwa* of Kṛttivāsa and on the other hand, the latter recensions of Kṛttivāsa's Rāmāyaṇa were also influenced by the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavism which grew up after the demise of Srī Caitanyadeva.

Impact of the Rama-lore in Bengali Folk-riddles

Manas Majumdar

Rural people of Bengal are acquainted with the Rāma-lore from their early childhood. To them, the Rāma-lore is a source of pleasure and education. Impact of the Rāma-lore is remarkable in every aspect of their life.

Folk-literature of Bengal is also enriched by the Rāma-lore. Influence of the Rāma-lore is significant in Bengali folk-literature.

There are so many folk-rhymes, proverbs, songs, dramas which bear witness to the familiarity of the people with the Rāma-lore. We may consider some riddles to prove this statement.

Riddles deal with problems. And they always prefer peculiarities. There are so many peculiar elements in every sphere of life which attract riddles. Because peculiarity has an extra attraction. It is also true for the riddles based on the Rāma lore.

We may divide the riddles into three types on the basis of their peculiarities.

First type : The riddles to contain some peculiar incidents. These riddles are based on supernatural birth-motif. The following riddle relates Sītā's birth :

Vāp janma dilā, kintu mā chilonā kāche,
Bhūmite utpanna baṭe, nāhi phale gāche.
Asambhab kathā jadi mānaha sakale,
Ei kathā mithyā nay, māṭite nārī mile,
—Kē Sē ?

(Father begot her ; mother was not present ; she came out from the earth, not as a product of a tree. It is not a baseless talk, accept it. Nor is it a concoction, the woman was found inside the earth.—Who was she ?)

The answer is Sītā. The above riddle relates the anecdote of Sītā's supernatural birth. She was not born of any woman. According to Vālmīki, Sītā was discovered by king Janaka, inside the field, while he was ploughing. The kind-hearted king rescued the newborn baby and nourished her with great care. In course of time, she was known as a daughter of that king. This riddle bears a folk motif, which is very popular in folk-literature. For specifying the motif, we may refer to Stith Thompson, author of the *Motif Index of folk-literature.* In his index, motif of the above riddle is 'earth gives birth to woman' (A 1234. 4).

Really, Sītā's birth is full of mystery. There are several stories regarding her birth. According to the 'Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa', Mandodarī, the chief queen of Rāvaṇa was her mother. Mandodarī was pregnant in the absence of Rāvaṇa after drinking some blood (extracted from the bodies of the sages) and sacred milk from a vessel which was brought by her husband. Naturally she felt ashamed. Concealing her pregnancy, she reached Kurukṣetra and buried the newborn baby. During ploughing, King Janaka picked up that daughter. She was brought up by him and she was called Sītā. (Canto : 8).

In his Rāmāyaṇa, Kṛttivāsa, a Bengali poet of fifteenth century, has narrated a different story. According to him, king Janaka was attracted by the paragon beauty of Menakā, a celestial nymph, and in excitement he discharged. His semen ultimately turned into a gold coloured egg. After some days, when he was engaged in ploughing, blade of his plough touched the egg and Sītā came out from that broken egg.

The birth story of Sītā is peculiar in character, rather supernatural. Who was her actual mother ? Infact, it is not clear to us. Vālmīki is silent, others differ. No doubt, the

topic is interesting for a riddle. And folks have done their utmost to make the best use of the topic.

There is another riddle based upon the birth anecdote of Kuśa, the younger son of Rāma. The riddle says :

Janma dilonā janmadātā, janma dilo pare ;
Jakhan tāhār janma holo mā chilonā ghare.
Ke Se ?.

(He had no father, he was born at the hand of an unknown person, his mother was absent when he was born ; who was he ?)

He was Kuśa. The above riddle is very popular among the common people of Bengal. The riddle bears a peculiar story. During her banishment, Sītā was living at Vālmīki's hermitage with her son Lava. One day, keeping Lava under Vālmīki's care, she went away to take her bath. At that time Vālmīki was deeply engaged in composing his immortal epic. Seeing him absorbed, Lava, the restless boy followed his mother's way and ultimately found her. Vālmīki was not aware of the matter. After some time, he made an enquiry for Lava, but could not find him. He was really concerned. He created a boy with the help of some *Kuśa* grass and gave him life. The boy had no difference with Lava. Sītā came back with Lava. Looking at Kuśa she was astonished and asked Vālmīki about him. Vālmīki confessed his mistake and requested Sītā to take charge of the new born boy as her own son. Vālmīki also gave him a name. The boy became famous as Kuśa.

Kuśa, the hero of this riddle, was born in this way without human parents.

We don't find this story either in Vālmīki or in Kṛttivāsa, probably this story is a product of oral tradition. We have also got it with some variation in Tibetan Rāmāyaṇa.

In this connection, we may remember a Bhādu song, collected from Bankura district in west Bengal, which relates almost the same story :

Sītā geiche sinān kairte
Sītār chilā nāi ghāte,

Kuśer chilā Venāi muni
rākhyeche sītār ghāte.
Sīnāi āsye sudhāy Sītā
i chila tā ke Vate
Lao mā Sītā, lao mā Sītā
tumāri Lava-Kuś Vaṭe.

[Sītā has gone for taking her bath. Her son has vanished from the bathing place. The sage (Vālmīki) has made a son by Kuśa (grass), and has kept the son at that place. After bath, Sītā asked, 'who is this boy ?' (The sage's reply) 'take him, take him, he is Kuśa, just like your Lava.]

We donot know the actual source of this story. May be, it is a folk-creation. Undoubtedly, the story bears a folk motif. According to Stith Thompson the motif is known as 'man made from grass' (A 1256. 1)

Second type : Some riddles are based on the peculiar physical aspects of man or woman of the Rāmāyaṇa. The following riddle is an example of this type :

Hasta dui śūnyākār cakṣu dui śūnya,
Dev nay, nar nay, rākṣasetei gaṇya.
—Ke Se ?

(He has twenty hands and twenty eyes ; He is not a god, not a man ; He is a rākṣasa. Who is he ?)

He is no other than Rāvaṇa.

According to Stith Thompson we may discover here two motifs : (a) 'Giant with many eyes' (F 531. 1. 1. 5) and (b) (b) 'Ten headed giant' (F 531. 1. 2. 2. 6). Rāvaṇa's physical peculiarity has inspired the folks to compose this riddle. Take another example :

Khayer Kṣudi vāṭār pān,
Strī puruṣer Vāiś kān
a Vāṭār pān khāve je,
a kathār uttar deve se.

[(Here is a) small pot full of catechu and betel leaf. Husband and wife have twenty two ears. If any one desires to eat betel-leaf of this pot, he must give a reply (to this riddle).]

Reply is Rāvaṇa and Mandodarī.

A question may arise here What is the significance of catechu or betel-leaf ? Remember the scene of women's gathering at late afternoon in a neighbour's house. They ask riddles each other with great pleasure. In front of them lies a pot of betel leaves with betel-nuts, catechu and liquid lime. They chew these at intervals. In this way they enjoy their leisure.

Third type : We must say something about a new type of riddles in which the peculiar acts of some character get importance. For example take this riddle :

> Paśu nay, Paśu sange karaye bhramaṇ,
> Kakhano jogīr beś, kakhano rājan.
> Asambhav kārya tār śune hāsi pāy,
> Pitār kanyār garve santān janmāy.

(He is not a beast, though he walks with the beasts ; sometimes he lives like a saint, sometimes he is a king. He is the father of his sister's children ; It is not absurd, though we feel inclined to laugh.)

He is Rāma. According to 'Dasaratha Jātaka' (No 461) Sītā is her sister. Some critics are of opinion that 'Dasaratha Jātaka' is an older creation than Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa. It tells us that Daśaratha was a King of Vārānasī. His first wife gave birth to two sons and one daughter. They were Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā. Rāma married his sister Sītā. In this connection, we may remember that Rāma was a descendant of Ikṣāku lineage. There was a marriage-tradition between brother and sister in this lineage. We get evidence of this tradition in Buddhist scriptures. Gautama Buddha was born in this lineage. This practice was also customary among the Kolios.

We do not know the actual source of this riddle. Probably, the riddle has been influenced by the Jātaka story.

From this discussion we may draw the following conclusions :

a. Riddles deal with the peculiar elements of the Rāma-lore.
b. Riddles are biographical in nature.
c. Some riddles are based upon myths.
d. Supernatural elements possess special attraction.
e. Role of folk-psychology is remrkable.
f. Some riddles bear folk motifs.
g. There are so many sources of these riddlles. Dasaratha Jātaka, Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa, Kṛttivāsa's Rāmāyaṇa and other Rāma-stories.

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Contributors

1. Probodh Kumar Bhowmick, Professor, Department of Anthropology, Calcutta University
2. Asim Kumar Chatterji, Lecturer in Ancient Indian History and Culture, Calcutta University
3. Bhabani Gopal Sanyal, Retired Lecturer, in Bengali, Calcutta University
4. Haripada Chakraborty, Retired Professor and Head of the Department of Bengali, North Bengal University
5. Suresh Chandra Moitra, Reader in Bengali, Jadavpur University, Calcutta
6. Gouri Kumar Brahma, Retired Reader in Oriya, Ravanshaw College, Cattack
7. Narendra Nath Misra, Reader in Oriya, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan
8. Upendra Nayak, Lecturer in Oriya, Bhadrak College, Orissa
9. Gopal Ch. Misra, Professor and Head of the Department of Oriya, Sambalpur University
10. Mazharul Islam, Former Vice-Chancellor, Rajshahi University, Bangladesh
11. Ujjal Kumar Majumdar, Reader in Bengali, Calcutta University

12. Arun Kumar Mukhopadhyay, Reader in Bengali, Calcutta University

13. Devendra Jha, Head of the Department of Maithili, Bihar University, Muzaffarpur.

14. Gour Mohan Roy, Lecturer, Loreto College, Darjeeling

15. Tushar Kanti Mahapatra, Secretary, Bengali Publications Committee, Calcutta University

16. Ajit Kumar Ghosh, Professor and Head of the Department of Bengali, Rabindra-Bharati University, Calcutta

17. Asit K. Banerjee, Professor, Department of Bengali, Calcutta University

18. Sukhendusundar Ganguly, Lecturer in Bengali Calcutta University.

19. Manas Majumdar, Reader in Bengali, Calcutta University.